

A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY ON MARUXA VILALTA'S
"A MATTER OF NOSES"

An Abstract of a Thesis by
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Maruxa Vilalta is a multi-faceted writer of contemporary Mexican drama. Her plays, although of unquestioned literary value, are generally unavailable to the English speaking public. Mexican theater and salient dramatists since 1950 are considered, and a biographical study of Maruxa Vilalta and her works made. "A Matter of Noses", which premiered on September 9, 1966, won great critical acclaim throughout the Spanish speaking world. It demonstrates Maruxa Vilalta's theatrical skills and exemplifies her anti-war philosophies as well as her concern for the struggle of people to overcome the dehumanizing forces of their environment. The play is a tragic farce which juxtaposes the childishness and ridiculousness of the fights between people for trivial motives with the senselessness of the wars that the world espouses. "A Matter of Noses" and a panorama of pertinent critical commentaries are translated and discussed in order to make them accessible in English.

A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY ON MARUXA VILALTA'S
"A MATTER OF NOSES"

A Thesis
Presented to
The School of Graduate Studies
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Lisa Routman
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Chapter 1

CONTEMPORARY MEXICAN THEATER

An observer in Mexico will find theater to be an exceptionally viable art form. There has been an uninterrupted chain of theatrical performances from PreColumbian periods to modern theater. In the colonial period W. Knapp Jones in his book, Behind Spanish American Footlights, mentions that, "When the Order of St. Hippolytus built a theater near the Royal Hospital for Indians, about 1627, it gave complete protection against rain."¹ Before that, plays were performed in "corrales" and "carpas". Later on with the era of the coliseums, the theatrical performances passed from the churches and religious schools, carpas, and corrales to the buildings known as "coliseos", or legitimate theaters. One of the earliest is the one in Puebla, Mexico, built in 1753.² Today Mexico City has over twenty legitimate theaters with daily productions. Of the non commercial theaters in Mexico City, three in particular are outstanding for their high level of dramatic productions. These are the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), the Instituto Nacional

¹W. Knapp Jones, Behind Spanish American Footlights (Austin, Texas: Univ. of Texas Press, 1966), p. 468.

²José Juan Arrom, Historia del teatro hispanoamericano (Yale Univ.: Ediciones de Andrea, 1967), p. 117.

de Bellas Artes (INBA), and the Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social (IMSS).¹

According to Rodolfo Usigli, a prominent playwright of twentieth century Mexico, the theater, more than any other art form, reflects the society that produces it.² Mexican writers have been keenly aware of the various trends and changes that have occurred in contemporary theater since the Post World War II Period. Since 1950, many varieties of dramatics have been produced. Theater appeals to all strata of the Mexican society, and thus, the productions are heavily attended, including both foreign and domestic works. There are examples of what have commonly been classified as realism, naturalism, expressionism, epic theater, theater of the absurd, and existentialist theater. The latter includes chaotic, antisocial or pathetic elements. It is related to expressionist theater and theater of the absurd, but its message is clearer and it contains more traditional elements than does the theater of the absurd.³

It would be possible to delve in greater depth into many of the current dramatic trends. However, because the translation of Maruxa Vilalta's "Cuestión de narices" belongs

¹George O. Schanzer, "The Mexican Stage in the Fall of 1971," Latin American Theater Review, Spring, 1972, p. 45.

²Rodolfo Usigli, México en el teatro (Mex.: Imprenta Mundial, 1932), p. 197.

³L. H. Quackenbusch, "Cuestión de vida y muerte: tres dramas existenciales," Latin American Theater Review, Fall, 1974, p. 49.

to the literary current of the absurd and existentialism, the scope of this survey will be limited to the mention of those dramatists and works that best exemplify Mexican existentialism and the theater of the absurd. These writers have a very cosmopolitan outlook and come from diverse backgrounds. They share, nevertheless, particularly close ties with France and the French existentialists. Although they are thoroughly familiar with the writings of Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre, and Jean Cocteau, the Mexican playwrights are seeking to express themselves as Mexicans.

To the existentialist genre belong such well known artists as Carlos Solórzano whose works may be exemplified by "Los fantoches" and "Las manos de Díos". These dramas portray personalities involved in a conflict between rebellion and submission. For Carlos Solórzano, good and evil are signified by liberty and oppression.¹

Another existentialist artist is Emilio Carballido, two of whose dramas, "La zona intermedia" and "Rosalba y los llaveros", exhibit a kind of neorealism. According to Ocampo de Gómez, he incorporates ordinary life into the world of drama with fantasy and poetic imagination. His most important contribution to Latin American Theater is the constant implementation of a vein of fantasy that transcends the traditional realism and regionalism of Mexican

¹Aurora M. Ocampo de Gómez/Ernesto Prado Velázquez, Diccionario de escritores mexicanos (Mex.: UNAM Centro de Estudios Literarios, 1967), p. 370.

theater. His fundamental thematic concerns are the exploration of the problem of reality and the problem of man's responsibility in his world.¹

Among the writings of José de Jesús Martínez are two popular existential dramas, "Juicio final" and "Enemigos". The pursuit and existential significance of life appear with great clarity in these works. Man passes from infancy to maturity, fights with death, and with the transition to a state beyond mortality. He especially disputes a priori conclusions and the trivialities that govern man's actions. The new social and human conscience attacks the prejudices of the past, but man simply suffers under these contradictory pressures. It is necessary to give him not only an anti-dogmatic aspect, but even an anarchistic and scandalous one. But most important is that in depriving him of all formalistic supports, he is left in a fluctuating and painful position.²

Ocampo de Gómez³ states that Elena Garro's dramatic style is characterized by great originality and poetic sensibility which is inclined towards surrealism. She is

¹Margaret Sayers Penen, trans., The Golden Thread and Other Plays by Emilio Carballido (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1970), p. 59.

²Horia Tanasescu, Existencialismo: pensamiento oriental y psicoanálisis (Mex.: Asociación Mexicana de Investigaciones Científicas y Humanistas, 1967), pp. 38-39.

³Ocampo de Gómez, Diccionario (Mex.: UNAM Centro de Estudios Literarios, 1967), p. 136.

concerned more with the lucidity of language than with exterior actions. She writes plays which depart from all scenic conventions, but which confide their destiny in her belief that the spoken work is the director of the scene. Her works include "La señora en su balcón" and "Un hogar sólido".

Luisa Josefina Hernández has written copiously and in several styles. Her best known works include "Botica modelo", "Los frutos caídos", and the classical tragedy "Los huéspedes reales" according to Ocampo de Gómez.¹ She began by treating the frustration of provincial life, especially in relation to the attempts of a woman to gain a measure of spiritual independence. In spite of her versatility and definitive social note, the essential attitude of her work is the belief in human communication as the only possibility to avoid our becoming nothing more than some errant ruins.²

Other figures of importance in the theater of modern Mexico include such people as Hector Azar, who has been most active in experimental theatrical productions; Octavio Paz, a poet, essayist, and diplomat as well as a dramatist; and Jorge Ibarrgüenengoitia who is known for his critical and periodical writings, as well as for his drama. Xavier

¹Ocampo de Gómez, Diccionario, p. 174.

²Frank Dauster, Historia del teatro hispanoamericano (Mex.: Ediciones de Andrea, 1966), p. 83.

Villarrutia is a poet, critic, and dramatist who died in 1950.¹

Contemporary of the above writers is the established novelist, short story writer, director and dramatist, Maruxa Vilalta de Yañez, who is most commonly referred to just by her Catalanian name, "Maruxa", pronounced "Mà-Rü-Ksä".

¹Antonio Magaña Esquivel, Teatro mexicano del siglo XX (Mex.: Fondo do Cultura Económica, 1970), p. 14.

Chapter 2

MARUXA VILALTA AND HER THEATER

Maruxa Vilalta was born in Barcelona, Spain, on September 23, 1932. Her father, Antonio Vilalta y Vidal, held a high government position until the fall of the Spanish Republic. He spent several years in Brussels as a political exile and finally moved to Mexico City in 1939. Her mother, María Soteras Maurí, the first woman to receive her doctorate in law from the University of Barcelona, and her father both practiced law in Mexico City. Her mother was instrumental in founding Mexico's social security system.

Maruxa grew up in an intellectual environment surrounded by books. Her literary interests began in early childhood. She earned the "Baccalaureat Francais" at the Leceo Franco-Mexicano, a six year program which greatly influenced her formation as a writer. Later she attended the College of Philosophy and Literature of the National Autonomous University of México. At the age of 16 she married Gonzalo Yáñez de Hoyo. They have two children, Adriana, born in 1955, and Gonzalo, born in 1959. Her parents and husband have always served as sources of encouragement and inspiration for her writing.

Ms. Vilalta likes to experiment with theatrical innovations in order to expand her creativity as she believes that art is an evolutionary process. She believes that liberty is inside the mind and she therefore tries to live making love with life itself.¹

Maruxa Vilalta as expressed in "Un día loco", "Soliloquio del tiempo", and "La última letra" is an existentialist writer. In her writing she has adopted existentialist philosophies in order to better express the loneliness and metaphysical distress of modern beings in their endless search for self-determination. The struggle of people to overcome the dehumanizing forces of their environment, to live a non stereotyped life, and to be more than a number or nameless face is cleverly juxtaposed with the struggle to progress and prosper as well as to cope with the influences of pragmatic realism.

In the dramas of Maruxa Vilalta, her characters must pursue their objectives without permitting themselves to be corrupted by external influences. They triumph or fail depending upon the degree of their fidelity to noble desires and their ability to withstand the inevitable corruption of their surroundings.²

¹The preceding biographical data were given by Ms. Vilalta in a letter written on October 2, 1978, to Lisa Routman. (See Appendix I)

²Sara Blaugrund, La integridad en los personajes de Maruxa Vilalta (El Paso: Univ. of Texas Press, 1965), pp. 18-19.

According to Mara Reyes¹, Ms. Vilalta expresses in dramatic form the necessity of becoming an individual secure against the indifference of the world, surpassing the anxiety to communicate something and the desperation of receiving no answer.

Her overall outlook on life is pessimistic but she shares the optimistic conviction that the solution of problems is worth the effort involved. Sara Blaugrund makes the point that hers is a protest against those forces that enslave people while at the same time she criticizes the complicity of those individuals in this frustration of destruction. Moreover, she is concerned with the physical and spiritual slavery of the modern worker to a routine. Ms. Vilalta is, as her plays reflect, an anti-war activist as well. Francois Baguer has commented that she aspires to remedy the maladies of our times through satire and humorism.²

She began her literary career as a novelist with El castigo (1957), Los desorientados (1958), and Dos colores para el paisaje (1961). She has written several short stories and essays. In 1974 she published a book of short stories, El otro día, la muerte. She has also translated various modern works from French and English into Spanish. She is active as a stage director and has been proposed several times

¹Mara Reyes, "Diorama Teatral," Excelsior, September 18, 1966, p. 2. (Subsequent quotes are from undated materials)

²Blaugrund, Integridad, p. 5.

for Theater Awards by the Mexican Association of Theater Critics. She has also written the prologues and selection notes for the First, Second, and Third Anthologies of One Act Plays, which is published by Colección Teatro Mexicano in 1959, 1960, and 1965.

Maruxa Vilalta's play, "Los desorientados", "The Lost Ones", was premiered at the Teatro de la Esfera on September 13, 1960. It is a version of her novel which she rewrote for the stage. Of it she says, "Its characters protested against conventionalism -- he had intellectual and artistic concerns, she had her own ideas about the freedom and independence of young people."¹

Another comment concerning this play is,

She expounds a youthful uncertainty doubtless near to herself due to her age, with indisputable depth. The work is a search for authentic values by a group of young people united by a deep need to overcome their loneliness, a search for the orientation that their parents do not know how to give them and that they themselves don't know how to find.²

"A Happy Country", "Un país feliz", premiered in the Teatro del Granero on January 15, 1964. The action takes place at a summer resort location in a Spanish speaking country in the rustic home of a family that, in order to weather the economic crisis which grips it, decides to take in foreign tourists as houseguests. The beauty of the

¹Maruxa Vilalta, Teatro (Mex.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972), p. 9.

²Dr. Carlos Suárez Radillo, "Presencia dramática de Maruxa Vilalta," Nivel, February 29, 1972, p. 1.

countryside, including the cordiality of the people, leads the tourist, who is ignorant of the political repression that weighs on the country, to consider it a happy country. The drama becomes evident when the young son of the family, who is a university student, is imprisoned. It is a piece which in a direct and irrefutable manner expounds the tragic reality of many Latin American countries, revealing in its author not only a great capacity of observation but a profound identification with the problems that concern everyone.¹

Maruxa Vilalta said of the play,

With the deliberate motive of giving a message that reaches most universally, I didn't want to give the tourist who visits the 'happy country' in my work a specific nationality but only that he epitomize a citizen of a rich and strong foreign nation. I wrote the work attacking the prevailing dictatorship in this 'happy country' by means of an imaginary anecdote, a student who is jailed and assassinated for protesting against the system.²

On July 31, 1964, her Trio, "Soliloquio del tiempo", "Un día loco", and "La última letra" was premiered at the Teatro Orientación. They are three works in one act completely separate in themselves but united by a common denominator, time, the factor which operates in the three works and in the three acquires importance.

"Time Soliloquy" was written in 1964, and is an incorporeal dialogue (that some people consider metaphysical). In it, time is given the luxury of speaking for itself, and

¹Suárez Radillo, Nivel, p. 2.

²Vilalta, Teatro, p. 11.

with the grandiosity of infinite space. The protagonist is an abstract person, whom the author¹ describes as young, flexible, like a mime, a dancer or a gymnast, wearing a coat of mail that also covers his head, leaving only his face uncovered. Ms. Vilalta stated that the text develops a delightful philosophical and poetic contest not without humor, that analyzed the relationship of time with human beings. From something external to man it becomes essential, to taste life, to "humanize" itself, unhappily incapable of ceasing to be something temporary, irremediably dynamically fleeting, a victim of itself, inevitably destined to self destruction.

Written in 1957, "A Crazy Day" is a story "enacted so that it is spoken directly to the public, it appears not a little daring to those who are advocates of conventional monologues."² Mara Reyes³ in the "Theatrical Diorama" of Mexico City's newspaper, Excelsior, says that it expresses the human anxiety to keep the minutes left to us to live, to exploit to the maximum the number of days given to us of which to dispose. It speaks for Humanity that loses hope in the face of the impossibility of conquering time and that instead of letting itself be conquered, fights to the end to transcend it.

Maruxa Vilalta calls "The Last Letter", which she

¹Vilalta, Teatro, p. 166.

²Vilalta, Teatro, p. 14.

³Reyes, Excelsior, [n.d.].

wrote in 1959, "a piece of conventionally realistic drama of a more traditional and approachable style than the other two monologues."¹ It develops its own treatment of psychological reality by means of which it defines penetratingly the anxieties of the protagonist, a writer whom it depicts in his shabby work room. By reading out loud from the sheets on which he is working, the latter comes unconsciously to imagine the arrival of an old friend whom he expects, with such conviction of his presence, that the spectator is able to feel his presence in the scene.²

"Together, Tonight, Loving Each Other So Much" was premiered in the Teatro del Graneo on April 10, 1970. It is a satire on egoism and hate. It tries through this means to exalt love. Casmirio and Rosalia are egotists, complete ruins. They present in the scene a tragically grotesque caricature of the extremes which deliberate non communication and hate can cause between human beings. It is a satire showing man's inability to feel or think about the problems and tragedies of others.³

In December, 1971, DILID, the International Theatrical Agency of Prague, published the Czechoslovakian version of "Esta noche juntos, amándonos tanto", under the title,

¹Vilalta, Teatro, p. 15.

²Suárez Radillo, Nivel, p. 1.

³William Knapp Jones, "Esta noche juntos amándonos tanto," Latin American Theater Review, Spring, 1971, p. 91.

"Like Two Pigeons, Like Two Turtledoves". It won the Mexican National Awards of Theater in 1970. In November, 1973, the English translation of the play premiered in New York's most famous Off-Broadway Theater, the Grammercy Arts Theater. It was presented again at the International Cervantine Festival in 1974, in Guanajuato, by the Spanish Theater Repertory Company. Radio Belgrad produced it in 1974, in Yugoslavia.

"Number 9" is a work which expounds the total dehumanization of man by industrial technology. It premiered in the Teatro del Graneo on October 5, 1965. According to Ms. Vilalta¹ it is a piece with shades of expressionism. Two workers are trapped in the vicious cycle of leaving one factory job for another; two men caught in the spider web of the machines and the factory that destroys and devours them. The end of the cycle is only the beginning when we see how the life of the younger character will have a terrifying similarity to that of the man who has just died, and how, in his turn, the path of this younger character is the same one that the child will follow. "Numero 9", translated to English by Dr. Mario Soria and W. Keith Leonard, was chosen by Stanley Richard for inclusion in The Best Plays of 1973. It was produced in French in 1971, along with "Un día loco", by ORTF, in the series "Nouveau Repertoire Dramatique de France Culture". It was produced in the United States at Drake University's Iberomerician Celebration of 1977. In

¹Vilalta, Teatro, pp. 14-15.

Italian, "Numero 9" was published in Teatro Latino Americano, 10 atti unici di 8 autori d'avanguardia in 1974.

The play "Nada como el piso 16" premiered at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in 1974, and in 1975 was awarded the best play of 1974, by the Asociación de Críticos de Teatro Mexicano. In 1976 it was awarded best play by the Unión de Críticos y Cronistas de Teatro. It was published by Editorial Joaquín Mortez and in 1977, won the prize in the Mexican series "Teatro del Volador".

"Nothing Like the 16th Floor" opened in Spanish at New York's Astor Theater Off-Broadway, in January, 1978. It was translated by Dr. Mario Soria and W. Keith Leonard and premiered in English at Simpson College in October, 1978, in Indianola, Iowa, in conjunction with a Simpson-Drake University Iberoamerican Celebration. The playwright attended performances of two of her plays while visiting the Indianola and Des Moines college campuses for the celebration. The play examines the tensions of life in a big city and in so doing, demonstrates how urban pressures can remove people from nature and the sources of natural life. This intense drama of control and entrapment heightens the awareness of the individual's freedom to choose for himself the kind of life he will lead.

Some other translations of her plays have appeared in L'Avant-Scene, in Paris; Modern International Drama, in New York; Latin American Literary Review, in Pennsylvania; and in Pembroke Magazine. Maruxa Vilalta was awarded the Gold Medal of the "Círculo de Letras Nuevos Horizontes" in Managua,

Nicaragua, in 1972, in acknowledgement of her outstanding artistic and literary career. In 1972, she addressed the Modern Language Association at its New York annual meeting on "Adventure in the Theater: Woman as Playwright".

"Historia de Él", or "The Story of Him", is under consideration for production on Broadway in 1979. The play had its Spanish premier in Mexico City in July of 1978, under the direction of Maruxa Vilalta. The author explained about her main character in the program notes of the July 14 premier:

He is an imaginary person. His story is in three separate stages, steps in which the goals in his life are, desire for money, for power, and for glory. He is ambition. It is he that, once power is achieved, does not know how to resign himself to the negative image that he has created as a dictator; he endeavors to exalt himself. 'The Story of Him' is not a story of an individual, but of the type of person; his not knowing how to resign himself is a phenomenon that many people have experienced in every period and time. In Mexico it happened for example to Iturbide whose wish to clean up his image was an attempt which cost him his life.¹

Her play "Cuestión de narices" was published in a pocket book edition in Catalan in Barcelona, Spain, and was chosen to represent Mexico in the Antología de Teatro Selecto Contemporáneo Hispanoamericano, published in Madrid in 1973. In the same year the production in Catalan directed by Ramón Dages won the "Ciudad de Manresa" prize. It first opened at the Teatro Orientación on September 9, 1966. The author commented on the play,

I developed this piece on three parallel planes of action which for myself I called, children-people-world. I tried to put on the same level the childishness and ridiculousness of the fight between the people for trivial

¹See Arturo Azuela, Historia de Él de Maruxa Vilalta (Mex.: UNAM, 1978), p. 2.

motives, with the senselessness of the wars that the world espouses, thus to expose the reproachable attitude of the adults who teach their children to fight. I followed a skeletal and intentionally redundant outline, which someone compared to 'an apparently simple drawing of a modern painter, but a bit figurative'. As for the character of Ulysses, the mute, I wanted to give him the capacity to love in counterpoint to the capacity to hate that those who fight have, over a 'matter of noses', heights, feathers, succulent bones -- read into these, markets, religion, and political supremacy.¹

It has also been said of the play that,

Starting from an essentially realistic situation, but deliberately shattering the unities of time and space, and almost completely ignoring concrete parameters, Maruxa develops an expressionist symbolic sketch that becomes evident from the beginning of the piece in the multicolored balloon which the two children share and quarrel over-the world-and which shows the absurdity of the reasons which underlie the conflicts between men and peoples.²

The play received great critical acclaim whenever it has been presented. The following are representative of the reactions of critics throughout Mexico and Latin America.³

It is a satire against wars expressed by efficiently using a contrapuntal form; to ridicule a triple fight among the inhabitants of a town, two children, and nations that, in the world, also fight over trifling motives. (P.A.M. "Lunes de Excelsior")

'A Matter of Noses' is the latest production of Maruxa Vilalta and has been treated by the author in the form of a tragic farce, excellently structured, on a contrapuntal base. It is a drama which describes the yearnings (of human beings) for peace and which scathingly refutes the bellicosity of human beings who for mere trifles align themselves with different groups with the aim of destroying each other...As Maruxa expounds in a crystal clear manner, as the genuine

¹Vilalta, Teatro, pp. 15-16.

² Suarez Radillo, Nivel, p. 1.

³The succeeding 12 commentaries were translated by Lisa Routman from materials provided by Ms. Vilalta from her personal archives without further identification.

human values are demolished by a 'matter of noses', she is putting her finger in the ulcer of our history, not only today, but for all times, since the Vietnam war isn't the first in the history of humanity and we fear that it won't be the last either. The author states in a superbly outlined manner the infinite repetition of senseless motives that cause wars between individuals, groups, and parties, who always, due to 'noses', which is understood to be markets, religion, or political dominance, launch the destruction of the lives of human beings... the game of mirrors and counterpoints is purely relative and has been managed by Maruxa with evident efficiency, as well in the moments of farce as in those of tragedy. In my belief, this is Maruxa's best theatrical work. (Mara Reyes, "Diorama de la Cultura" de Excelsior)

'A Matter of Noses', which shows the adult world in constant turmoil from all sorts of trivialities, is proof of the progress of Maruxa Vilalta as pertains to her dramatic structures, because there are no gaps or disconnected sketches, but rather action developed on several social levels, without time or location constraints. Maruxa Vilalta doesn't even resort to the often employed recourse of a narrator who goes along tacking together scenes, situations and dialogues; everything is movement, drama... 'A Matter of Noses' is proof of Maruxa Vilalta's advancement, her maturity as a theatrical writer; even in her title, which is not a little unusual, there is a certain ironical accent in the allusion to the causes that make countries and men fight and go to war, and this irony which runs throughout the action, is expressed valiantly. (Antonio Magaña Esquivel, "Novedades")

The drama, in two acts, a parable and a tragedy, a piece of ardent social criticism, develops its theme with a superb combination of satire and rapid dialogues, of scenes that develop ably... 'A Matter of Noses' is a mass piece, the many actors on stage are constantly forming plastic pictures or by means of coordinated shifts, adding more force to the dialogues which were already strong by themselves. Hypocrisy, false religiousness, corrupt politics, idiotic arguments (Aren't perhaps all arguments stupid?), the 'humane' attitude of man towards his fellowman (Why say 'inhuman' attitude, since it is humans who foster destruction and hate?); all this is attacked in 'A Matter of Noses'. At the same time it is, without doubt, an interesting garden of esoteric plants. (Jed Linde, The News)

Maruxa gave gusto with symbolism; she employs it with the ball which is the world and which is fought over by the two children, she continues it with the battle of the politicians and of the industrial magnate for superiority, and she ends it with the war itself; in a very current Romeo and Juliet. Terror of the atomic bomb isn't important either to the children or to the men who fight for the ball or over the size of their noses. There is only an invalid, who is a direct descendant of the theater of panic, and a couple of lovers who oppose such stupidity and such misery uselessly making an offering of their lives. It is a skeletal drama, this drama of Maruxa's, a concrete drama, a drama of the necessary parameters, a drama of substance, in which things are said in the simplest possible way, and for some perhaps simplistically, but absolutely voluntarily, it says the most important things in the easiest and most natural way. It is like a sketch, like a seemingly simple modern painter's picture which is a little figurative.
(María Luisa Mendoza, El Día)

Cain kills Abel. At the same time in another part of the world, Vietnam fights against Vietnam... Everything is a question of ideologies, of exteriors, of power, of beliefs, of commerce. Everything is a matter of noses. Men destroy each other with the jawbones of burros or with atomic equipment. This is the thesis of the work. It embraces all men. It projects over all humanity. The theme which seems obscure, drastic, serious, lends itself to achieving a tragedy (or a near tragedy). Maruxa created on the other hand, a stupendous tragicomic farce. Throughout its two acts, even in the most pathetic moments, a machete stroke of hilarity always exists. The characters are shown in their most naked form with their vices and desires, with their complaints and grievances. In the most hidden part of each of us there is something laughable, something ridiculous. This is what suddenly comes out and provokes the public hilarity. But this ridiculousness is in its depths, pathetic. There are throughout the work, certain criticisms. Mechanization, pseudoculture, pride, political machinations, wealth, servilism, the commercial aspect of death, belief in one's superiority, inclemency, treason...all that evil which forms us and ought to be criticized. Only love is treated in a serious manner. And that is because love has always been the most serious thing that exists, it is the unifying knot and probably the only road to peace...It is noticeable in this work that there is a restlessness in the new theater. It is necessary to see it. A very few years ago it could have been said that it was

experimental theater. In the experimental sense, not in what it has wrongly been given. Today it is the reality of an entire movement of change and improvement. We have something tangible that we shouldn't allow to slip out of our hands. There are authors and directors who are traveling along a new road...Today it is Maruxa Vilalta. Tomorrow it will be she again and many others with theatrical bravery in Mexico. (Lys Engel, Impacto)

Maruxa in her work, avoids very skillfully, the dangerous risk of getting lost in the theater of displeasing projections by the subjectiveness of her content, demonstrating dexterity and dominion of theatrical technique, which one may be assured she already manages with experience and demonstrable dexterity. (Carmen G. de Tapia, El Universal Gráfico)

The thesis or message of the work is of permanent validity, from the time that men organized themselves into communities, it was always possible for a reason to separate into groups, it is not important whether the reason may be their noses, the color of their skin, a flag, or an imaginary border. The fact is that once the battle is unleashed, nobody has sufficient power of conviction to enforce harmony, and when peace is re-established, the victims remain on the battle field, innocent most of the time, of the grounds that were disputed. (Simon Armen/Gol, Revista Cruz Roja Mexicana)

The action games symmetrically staged by characters or groups who arrange and shift in a balanced form, continue throughout the entire piece. The same system of symmetries and contrasting actions exists in the diverse movements of the plot of the work; the fight between the exfriends and their followers over a matter of noses ends, and is replaced by another which pits the short people against the tall, while over the radio the news arrives of a war between two countries, peace between them, and then another war between the countries. At the fringe of all this and as a counterpoint to it, are Ulysses, the mute, lonely and independent, fearing war and all conflicts that resemble it, and Leo and Cecelia, idealized lovers...With the failure of Ulysses who wanted to oppose the cyclical dance of war, and the destruction of Leo and Cecelia's idyll with his death, and the corresponding triumph of warlike tendencies in the community and in the world, the antiwar theme of the work is expressed. (Robert L. Bancroft, "Tema, Personajes y Estructura Dramática En Cuatro Obras Teatrales de Maruxa Vilalta," presented to the International Congress of Hispanists in Salamanca, Spain in September 1971)

Beginning with an essentially realistic situation, but consciously breaking the unities of time and space, ignoring almost totally "concrete" supports, Maruxa Vilalta develops a symbolistic expressionist scheme that is evident from the beginning of the piece in the multicolored balloon that the two children alternately share and quarrel over; the world, and she exposes the absurdity of the reasons that motivate the conflicts between people and between towns. (Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo, Teatro Selecto Contemporáneo Hispano-americano, Madrid, Spain, 1971)

In 'A Matter of Noses', Maruxa Vilalta, using the kind of farce shows revealingly all that the vanity and stupidity of man can lead us to when, because of a 'matter of noses', long or Roman, he is capable of destroying love and peace. In the work are manifest very theatrically these infantile and gregarious attitudes that have cost humanity so many wars. There is no doubt that the story of human stupidity greatly outweighs the story of its wisdom. (Raul Moncada Gain, "El Libro Y La Vida Gaceta de Información y Crítica," El Día)

The tale illustrates the irrationality of the competition among men, its unmanageable manifestation in all human acts, until it becomes a structure destined paradoxically to its own destruction, that of war. The stage directions are so abundant in this work, that the scenic occurrences take on primary importance, so much so that on occasions, the dramatic sequence is expressed totally in physical acts, and not in words; the consequences must be optically rendered to realize their exact dramatic dimension. (Carlos Solórzano, "Análisis de 'Teatro' de Maruxa Vilalta-Revista," La Vida Literaria, Mexico)

Maruxa Vilalta is the creator of a theater that is preoccupied with grasping new forms and a modern spirit, not only in her treatment of characters and events, but also in her language and her scenic design; these qualities achieve realism loaded with timeless relationships in pieces like 'A Happy Country', but they acquire a tone of tragic farce in others like 'A Matter of Noses', in those that establish the harmony and relativity of human existence. (Antonio Magaña Esquivel, Teatro Mexicano del Siglo XX, Mexico, 1971)

"A Matter of Noses", as has been demonstrated in the preceding commentaries, is an important example of the dramatic talents of Maruxa Vilalta. It exemplifies her

outlook on theater. She is "a woman of great spiritual delicacy, cultured, intelligent, and preoccupied with the problems of her time on which she focuses from the liberal viewpoint of her education and formation."¹

Play Synopsis

"Cuestión de narices" is a tragic farce about the absurdity of war. Two friends, Richardo and Roberto, make fun of each other's noses and then gather their families and supporters into hostile bands of "Long Noses and Short Noses". The warriors are the craftsmen, technicians, professionals, men, politicians, churchmen, and business men, and office workers of the town, along with their family members who together represent the bourgeoisie. With their partisan passion blinding them to the harm they will do, the two sides plot and maneuver and eventually put a violent end to the stylistic love affair between Richardo's younger daughter, Leo, and Roberto's sister Cecelia, Romeo and Juliet. They take peace around Leo's corpse but as the play ends they grouped themselves anew for a combat of "Long Noses and Short Noses".

In a satirical manner in which Ms. Vilalta manages to combine the two antagonistic characters and the little details of the play, she creates the effect of an ordered dance.

1. "Cuestión de narices", "La Escena", Ultimas Noticias,

Outside their pattern and in a sort of contrapuntal relationship to it move Leo and Cecelia, symbolizing the innocent and lovely things that war will destroy, and Ulysses, a strange man who is horrified at war but, like the consciences he symbolizes, can not speak. As background to all this the radio gives reports of equally absurd wars between nations. This work, although its theme is somber, is a spectacle rich in the play of lights and colors and ballet-like movements, amusing stylized characters and moments of light humor.¹

Maruxa Vilalta has explained her feelings about the theater,

I conceive of theater as a mystery par excellence. I conceive it like religion, and like politics, independently of what is said or not about religion and politics, independently of what is or isn't promised. I conceive of theater being at the same time enlightenment and madness. More, perhaps above all, I conceive it as communication between one human being and another, like a cathartic experience.²

"A Matter of Noses" is unquestionably a drama of relevance and one that deserves to be seen and experienced. In the following chapter the play has been translated into English in order that it may attest to its own merits.

¹Robert L. Bancroft, "Cuestión de narices", Latin American Theater Review, Spring, 1973, p. 82.

²Maruxa Vilalta, "El teatro como estremecimiento", La Cabra-Periódico del Teatro Universitario, January 15, 1972, pp. 2-4.

Chapter 3

A MATTER OF NOSES by Maruxa Vilalta

Characters

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Child I | The Electrician |
| Child II | Blas, the Cafe Owner |
| Ulysses | Dorothy Virginia |
| Robert | Angelina |
| Richard | Angela |
| Leo | The Doctor |
| The Bank President | The First Maid |
| Cecelia | The Second Maid |
| The Landlady | Agatha |
| The Bus Driver | The Teacher |
| The Baker | The Secretary |
| The First Watch Man | The Shoemaker |
| The Second Watch Man | The Funeral Director |
| The Mayor | The Priest |

The action takes place any place in the world.

The present time is now.

Note: It should be noted that the 28 characters may be played by 23 actors if 5 of them, in addition to their roles, also play those of the landlady, the bus driver, baker, and the first and second watch men.

Act I

- Scene I. The street and bank offices.
- Scene II. Blas Cafe.
- Scene III. The street and Robert's and Richard's houses.
- Scene IV. The street and the bank president's home.
- Scene V. The schoolhouse, mayor's office, electrician's and shoemaker's shops, the funeral director's home, and the church.

Act II

- Scene I. Blas Cafe.
- Scene II. Richard's and Robert's houses.
- Scene III. The bridge.
- Scene IV. The funeral parlor.

The setting should not be realistic. No cyclorama, a few platforms and as little scenery as possible. The scene changes should be done in front of the audience.

Act IScene I

Offices of the "Prosperity Bank" and the street outside. In the offices, there are exits to other departments and an imaginary door faces the street. Two window frames suggest teller's windows, which at the proper moment will lower to a height on stage so that the characters can approach them. Behind the teller's windows are props that can serve as chairs and three desks.

The stage is dark. A ball or balloon, striped in several colors, spins under the spotlight in the street. Child I and Child II enter, running behind the ball. They are about 9 years old and dressed similarly with shorts, and wear rouge on their cheeks. They approach the ball, as though attracted by a magnet; the ball appears especially desirable to them in the spotlight...

Child I: It's green! Look how it's spinning! It's all green!

Child II: No, it's red!

Child I: It's blue!

Child II: Yellow!

Child I: All green, like the one the teacher took away from me.

Child II: Don't worry. I'll let you use this one.
(He picks up the ball. The moment he puts his hands on it, the stage lights up.)

- Child II: It's a deal... (A friendly punch in the stomach, a poke on the chin, and grabs the other child's hand in a quick ritual while he says as though repeating a slogan)... Pals together. I'll let you use all my toys.
- Child I: (Same game). Pals together. I'll let you use all my toys. (They play, making the ball bounce).
- Child II: Is it true that your daddy controls all the money in the bank?
- Child I: Yes, he controls it all.
- Child II: He must have a lot of money.
- Child I: A lot!
- Child II: My daddy is the mayor.
- Child I: I know that!

From one end of the street Ulysses enters. He is lame and mute, thought to be crazy, and drags one leg. He wears his rags with dignity. His appearance could almost be classified as distinguished. His bearded face is wrinkled. He is about 50 or maybe looks older than he is. His eyes, in spite of his supposed mental state, show sparks of intelligence; his strange but vivid glance is the only lively thing about his drab looking body. He has a greasy knapsack or saddle bag hanging from his shoulder. The children surround him singing teasingly.

- Children: (In unison). The boogie man, the boogie man, he's going to get us, he's going to take us away.
- Child I: (Frightened). He's going to get us.
- Child II: Don't be dumb. There are no boogie men. They are only fairy tales.

- Child I: And what if Ulysses came from a fairy tale?
(Frightened, the children observe Ulysses, whose appearance is friendly).
- Child II. No, they can't come out of a fairy tale.
Characters can't ever escape from a story.
- Child I: That's right. We're not afraid of you, Ulysses.
(They jump and dance around him, singing in unison).
- Children: We're not afraid of you, Ulysses, we're not
afraid of you, Ulysses, Ulysses.

Suddenly Child II grabs the knapsack and runs away with it, followed by Child I. Too late Ulysses tries to stop them. He makes a guttural sound like a sad cry.

Child II: That's it. I grabbed it from him.

Ulysses walks toward the children in a pitiful stance with his hand extended, pleading for his knapsack. He tries to speak. His lips tremble. Again he makes his guttural cry. The children, impressed, begin to doubt.

Child I: (Trying to hide his feeling). Give it back to him...

Child II walks toward Ulysses and offers him the knapsack. He takes it and holds it against himself, as though trying to protect it.

Child I: At least now we know what you have in there. A radio.

Child II: Such a big sack for a radio.

Child I: Will you show it to us?

Child II: Come on, Ulysses, let us see it.

With heavy movements, Ulysses opens the knapsack and takes out a portable radio and turns it on. From the radio comes some soft music. Ulysses pulls the radio close to his ear and listens with a blissful expression on his face.

Child II: How about the news? Aren't you going to listen to today's news, Ulysses?

Ulysses stands up brusquely. The enchantment is broken. Now there is a sad expression on his face.

Child I: . The news, Ulysses. What's happening in the news?

Ulysses puts the radio away in his knapsack. Dragging his leg, he walks down the street. The children follow him, jumping and dancing.

Child II: Is it true that you've travelled a lot?

Child I: Is it true you don't have a tongue?

Child II: Why do you always listen to the news?

Child I: Open your mouth, Ulysses, we want to see if you have a tongue.

Children: (In unison, singing behind Ulysses). You don't have any tongue, you don't have any tongue...

Ulysses disappears followed by the children. Richard, Robert and Leo enter the bank offices. Richard and Robert wear clothes whose style and cut give us the idea of farce... Some freedom may be permitted in their costumes and makeup. There is similarity in their behavior and in their ages; both look about 35 years old. Something, however, distinguishes them. Richard's nose is long and Robert's is short.* Leo is younger. His clothes are of a less fanciful color. He has a very white face. He sits at his desk and pretends to write and arrange papers. Richard and Robert each pretend to lower their windows which come down in front of them. Both look through their windows and count imaginary bills.

Robert: 1887, 1888, 1889... (He yawns)...Aah...

Richard: 7995, 7996, 7997... (He yawns)...Aah...(He looks at his companion). Robert, my friend, my excellent friend.

Robert: Richard, my best friend.

Richard & (Unison). We are friends, just like brothers.
Robert:

Leo, in a different world, stands up. He sighs deeply. He sits down and continues working.

Richard: (He continues counting). 8028...Are there many withdrawals?

* If characterizations are used, these should not be exaggerated or ridiculous, and ought to be unnoticeable by the public in contrast to the long and short noses which the characters later on will use, including Richard and Robert, and which will be definitely and noticeably artificial and caricaturesque.

Robert: Like always. (counts) 1,901 and 46 cents, 47 cents... and in deposits?

Richard: Like always. How is everyone at home?

Robert: They're fine. Want a beer when we close?

Richard: I'll buy.

Leo stands up. He sighs, sits down and continues working.

Robert: (To Richard). Your brother sighs a lot.

Richard: Yes, he's in love.

Robert: With my sister.

Richard and Robert stop counting. They put away the imaginary money and sit down in front of their desks. They each take cardboard boxes painted like calculating machines and stand them up, each on his own table. Leo stands up and sighs. He sits down again and resumes his work.

Richard: (While he pretends to push buttons on the machine). 1952 and 54 cents...(He pretends to pull a lever and imitates the sound of a bell)...Ring...(He pushes buttons again)...Plus 57.50...(He pulls the lever twice)...Ring, ring...(He continues in a low voice).

Robert: (Same game)...3785 point 5...(He pulls the lever)...Ring, less 22 with 37.9...(He pulls the lever three times)...Ring, ring, ring...(He continues).

The Bank President enters. He is about 50. He has a rosy face and eats well. He is dressed in flamboyant colors

and has his fingers covered with rings. You could say he is a butcher dressed up for a holiday.

Richard: Mr. President! (A deep bow like a muslim bowing to Allah).

Robert: Mr. President! (Same bow).

President: (Pleased, greeting them in a condescending tone).
Richard..... Robert.....

Richard & Robert: (In unison). Mr. President! (They repeat the bow at the same time and sit down again at their desks. The President stops in front of Leo).

President: Leo, you forgot to bow.

Leo: Mr. President! (Bow).

President: That's it, that's much better. (Leo sits at his desk again. The President scratches himself).

Richard: How are your hives, Mr. President?

President: (Without stopping the scratching). Better, much better. A nervous rash...Too much work, evidently.

Richard & Robert: (They stand up and repeat in unison). The Bank President works a lot. The Bank President works a lot. (They sit down).

President: (Harranguing). Yes, I work a lot. I am a man of wealth!

Richard & Robert: (They stand up and repeat in unison). The Bank President is a man of wealth! (They sit down).

President: (Sticks out his chest and struts majestically in front of his employees). Well, well...I shall be in my office (Emphasizing) with my friend, the mayor. (He leaves).

Leo stands up and heaves a very deep, sad sigh which provokes some enchanted music and a magical climate to which the lights add. Cecelia approaches along the street, opens

the imaginary door, and enters the bank. She is fragile, ethereal, pallid and beautiful, about 20. Her facial makeup resembles Leo's, it is excessively white, like a mime. She is dressed in clear colored gauze which contributes to giving her the appearance of an idealized being. Her glance meets Leo's. A light above each one seems to isolate them from their surroundings. Richard intervenes.

Richard: Leo... (Leo gestures toward Richard who remains completely still like a picture hung on a wall).
Robert: Cecelia, little sister. (The same gestures from Cecelia toward Robert who remains still like Richard).

Leo and Cecelia advance, offering their hands to each other. As they unite and the stage lights come up, the music which reached a climax, is silent.

Cecelia: Leo.
Leo: Cecelia.

They open the imaginary door and go out onto the street. Robert and Richard regain their movement.

Robert: What a way of ignoring us!
Richard: As if we don't exist!
Robert: As if we were paintings on the wall.
Richard &
Robert: (In unison). We are wall paintings! (They turn half way and leave).

Leo: I feel fine next to you. I love you, Cecelia.
Cecelia: I love you, Leo. (Their faces get closer.
They are going to kiss when a disturbing musical chord is heard).

The lights dim and the landlady appears from some unknown place. She looks and sounds like an old witch, with matted hair, rouge, and an apron. There is an enormous bunch of keys at her waist. Leo and Cecelia separate.

Landlady: You cannot love her.

The bus driver jumps onto the stage. He wears a cloth cap and a ski jacket. He has a steering wheel in his hands.

Driver: You cannot love her.

A baker appears. He has a white apron and a huge hat. He carries a long loaf of bread on his shoulder like a rifle.

Baker: You cannot love her.

The two clock men enter and stand beside one another. They wear mesh suits and have faces which are covered by frameworks that reach to the middle of their bodies and which look like the outer frame of a grandfather clock. They move their heads proportionally and mechanically the same amount back and forth while making the tick, tock sound of a clock.

Clock Men: (In unison). Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock. You cannot love her. You cannot love her. Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock, tick! (They hold still with their faces the same direction).

President: (Enters, marching as if in a military parade). You cannot love her.

Leo: Why not? Who are all of you?

Landlady: (Steps forward one step). Your landlady.

Baker: (Steps forward one step). Your baker.

Bus Driver: (Steps forward one step). Your bus driver.

President: (Steps forward one step). Your boss, the Bank President.

Clock Men: (They step forward at the same time and speak in unison). The clock men. We are time. You cannot love her!

Bus Driver: Lay her once and leave us alone.

Leo: I don't want to lay her...I want to love her.

All: (President, Baker, Bus Driver, and Landlady in unison). You can't. You don't have any money.

Clock Men: (In unison). You don't have time. (They begin to move their heads from side to side). Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock. You don't have time. Tick, tock, tick. (They freeze).

Landlady: Pay me the rent.

Bus Driver: Get on my bus.

Baker: Buy my bread.

President: I don't want you to neglect your obligations at the bank because of foolishness.

Clock Men: (In unison). You don't have time for love. You don't have time.

Bus Driver: You haven't paid the bus fare.

Baker: When you have eaten this bread, you'll want another loaf and another...You owe me for three loaves of bread.

Landlady: You need another job. You need another job.

President: You are sleeping in the office, young man.
Choose: Your new job or the bank.

Clock Men: (Aggressively step forward together and say in unison). You cannot love her.

All: (Bus Driver, Landlady, Baker, and President step forward and repeat all at once). You cannot love her.

The apparitions surround the lovers. Cecelia takes shelter from Leo who embraces her. They kiss. The uniting of their mouths is like a mortal wound for the apparitions, like the stab of a sword. All at the same time, the Clock Men put their hands on their hearts, the Bus Driver on his back, the Landlady on her head, the Bank President and the Baker on their stomachs; all with an exclamation of pain.

All: (Unison). OOOOOOOH

Without removing their hands from their wounds, they begin to walk backward and disappear. Leo and Cecelia, who remained together in the kiss, separate and look around them.

Leo: They have gone.

Cecelia: It always happens like that when you kiss me. Everything that hinders our love disappears.

Leo: Nothing's going to hinder it. We're getting married.

Cecelia: We'll have a bedroom with seven pink walls.

Leo: I'll be a cashier.

Cecelia: And a huge crystal fishbowl to receive calling cards.

Leo: They will appoint me a trustworthy employee.

Cecelia: There will always be music.

Leo: Right away they will make me assistant to the assistant of the advisor of the first advisor.

Cecelia: The children's room decorated in velvet and cotton.

Leo: There it is. I am first advisor.

Cecelia: Long, deep corridors filled with doors and more doors.

Leo: Assistant manager.

Cecelia: Windows and windows.

Leo: Vice-president.

Cecelia: What a beautiful house!

Leo: President of a whole chain of banks.

Leo and Cecelia join hands and head toward the end of the street at the same time that Richard and Robert enter to take their places at their desks in front of their adding machines.

Robert: 3400 plus 5320. Ring.

Richard: 4285. Ring, ring.

The Bank President, who now walks normally, and the Mayor enter. The Mayor looks about 60 years old, and very conscious of his authority. He wears a starched collar and a crafty smile. He is short and tries to make himself look

important by his dress. He has a moustache and a gold chain leading to a pocket watch which he consults too frequently, and an umbrella from which he never parts.

President: Mr. Mayor. Allow me to congratulate you. Your account is growing daily. City hall overflows, huh?

Mayor: (Without losing his composure). What do you mean?

President: Oh, nothing, nothing, Mr. Mayor. (To the employees, authoritatively)...Gentlemen, I'll be back soon. I'm going to accompany the Mayor.

Mayor: (He greets the employees petulantly). Gentlemen. (Richard and Robert are going to answer but the President orders...)

President: Keep working!

Richard & Robert: (In unison). Yes, Mr. President. (They get involved in their work).

President: (Obsequiously opens the imaginary door). After you, Mr. Mayor, after you. (They go out onto the street).

Mayor: My dear Harold, I must remind you that you have a "small matter" pending.

President: (Breaking out in a new rash). Yes, yes, Mr. Mayor. I wanted to talk to you about it too. Perhaps, while this...unfortunate situation is being resolved, could you accept a small donation?

Mayor: What? You suggest that I accept money?

President: Oh no, not you personally, Mr. Mayor. A small donation...for the people.

Mayor: Small?

President: Or large, whatever you say. Enough for the restoration of the park, for example. Everything for the people. You wouldn't be left anything.

Mayor: Nothing?

President: Well, you will be left with a fair compensation for your work.

Mayor: Ah, good. We'll have time to talk about it. Come to my office, dear Harold.

President: Delighted, Mr. Mayor. I'll come one of these days.

Mayor: Tomorrow. At ten o'clock.

President: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

The mayor leaves and the President re-enters the bank. He watches with satisfaction Richard and Robert who are engrossed in their work. An electrician comes along the street who is about 25 years old, strong, muscular, and aggressive with his shirt exaggeratedly tight to show off his biceps so that he looks like a gladiator. He opens the imaginary door and enters the bank. The President is now in front of Leo's unoccupied desk.

President: (In this section). I had three employees. (He sees the electrician). Ah, it's the electrician!

Electrician: Mr. President. (He shakes his hand and appears to have given him an electric shock. He laughs). Static electricity.

President: Very funny.

Electrician: (To Robert). I am bringing a check.

Robert: I'll take care of it immediately. (He approaches the window and takes an imaginary check).

Leo and Cecelia enter along the street. They open the bank door and gaze at each other. Leo walks backward

toward his desk without seeing the President who is watching him indignantly. Cecelia doesn't see the electrician who is admiring her.

Electrician: Cecelia.

Cecelia: (To Leo). I'll see you tomorrow. (She turns half way and goes out onto the street. The electrician stands entranced looking towards the place where she disappears).

President: (To Leo). What is the meaning of this?

Leo: (A thousand miles away). Cecelia...

Robert: (To the electrician). Here you are. Five, 6 and 750.

Electrician: Huh, what? Oh, yes, thank you. (He pretends to put away the money and leaves through the imaginary door sighing)...Ah, Cecelia...(He disappears at one end of the street).

The President confronts Leo with a very unfriendly face, but at that moment the sound of a loud bell is heard. Richard, Robert, and Leo stand up and each takes a large hat.

President: One moment!

Richard: (Pretends to push his window up toward the ceiling where it disappears. He puts on his hat). It is time, Mr. President.

Robert: (Same gesture). It's time. The bell has rung.

Leo: (He puts on his hat). The bell has rung.

Richard: I have collected.

Robert: I have paid.

Leo: I have marked and checked.

Richard: I have added.

Robert: Subtracted.

Richard & Robert: (In unison). Multiplied and divided.

Richard: Tomorrow I shall collect.

Robert: Tomorrow I shall pay.

Leo: Tomorrow I shall make lists.

Richard & Robert: (In unison). We have written, marked, and checked. Tomorrow we shall collect, pay; we shall make lists and write numbers and letters. Until tomorrow.

President: One moment. Did you forget our anthem? I was an employee of this bank for 20 years without ever forgetting the anthem. (The employees gather in front of the President as they do every day...)

Robert: Excuse us, Mr. President.

Richard: We are ready, Mr. President.

Leo: Yes, we're ready.

President: Good...Let's begin. (The employees look at each other. The President gives the downbeat and everyone sings, as if repeating a lesson).

Richard & Robert: Together, always together in the Prosperity Bank. Friendly, always friendly in the Prosperity Bank. We're working together hand in hand. We share peace and friendship. No one will separate us, we share peace and friendship.

Richard & Robert: (Now, without singing, they repeat in unison)... Together always together, we share peace and friendship.

President: Peace!

Richard & Robert: (In unison). And friendship!

Dark.

Act IScene II

Blas Cafe. The props are sometimes used as tables, chairs and a counter. Upstage Richard and Robert are conversing, seated behind imaginary glasses of beer. Backstage seated at another table is Ulysses with his knapsack near him. Behind the counter is Blas in shirt sleeves and an apron. His cheeks are very red from drinking too much of the beer he sells in his cafe. He drinks from an imaginary glass and pretends to dry and put away others above the counter.

Blas: Eleven glasses arranged vertically aren't the same as eleven glasses arranged horizontally. (He takes a horizontal line of imaginary glasses on the counter)...7, 8, 9, 10, 11...(He places glass 11). Today there have been no interesting conversations. I'm very busy. All day I'm very busy. I must have the glasses in order. Wash and dry them and have them always in order and listen to everything the customers say. I'm very busy all day.

Robert: (He pretends to raise his glass). Good beer.

Richard: (Takes his glass). Very good.

Robert: Cheers.

Richard: Cheers. (They drink and continue talking).

Blas: (He now puts the glasses in lines of 3)...1, 2, 3. Yesterday there were 5 more glasses. I hope business isn't going down. (He goes over to Ulysses)...What'll you have?

Ulysses looks at Blas without flinching. He opens the knapsack and with complete calm takes out first a torn under-

shirt, followed by some old socks, and finally a sandwich. He unwraps it and starts to eat it.

Blas: (Furiously). All right, at least don't be a bother.

Ulysses shrugs his shoulders and takes his radio out of the knapsack. He begins to turn the dials. Blas returns to the counter where he serves himself a beer and drinks. Then he continues with his pantomime arranging glasses. The scene director should get a caricature of the daily activities of a cafe owner. Richard and Robert drink their beer.

Robert: You introduced me to the Japanese girl. I'll never forget it.

Richard: And you sent her back to me.

Robert: I owe you so much.

Richard: My buddy.

Robert: My wonderful friend. (They drink).

Radio: (Ulysses raises the volume of the radio)...And in a moment you will hear...(Ulysses changes the station; music is heard, a tango; it changes to a pathetic melodrama)...Catherine, my life, do you mean to say that I'm going to...that you're going to have...(He changes to a strident tango; he changes to the syrupy voice of a woman giving a commercial)...Heel resistors, the best soles on the market. Use them...Try them...Heel resistors...(He changes to a man's voice)...Greyhoundland has built 79 more interplanetary rocket bases. 79 rocket bases...

Blas: Enough! Turn it off!

Ulysses's radio is turned off. He stands up trying to protest. Blas gives him a shove that makes him fall back into

his chair.

Blas: Sit down!

Ulysses tries to get up again furiously. He advances toward Blas who retreats with fear. It would seem that Ulysses has grown; he looks impressive. He takes Blas by the shoulders and begins to shake him like a scarecrow. Richard and Robert intervene.

Richard: No, Ulysses.

Robert: Let him go.

Ulysses ignores Richard and Robert. But soon he realizes what he is doing. He looks at the prey in his hands and begins to tremble. He lets Blas go.

Blas: You can't fight. You are useless! The war, Ulysses. Look how the war left you.

At the word 'war', Ulysses shakes with terror. Blas, seeing the effect that it gets, continues yelling...

Blas: War, Ulysses, War! War!

Ulysses covers his ears with his hands. He whines pitifully. Blas goes toward Richard and Robert's table.

Blas: I know why he doesn't talk. It's something psychological. When he was in the war he had to relay an order and everyone died. Now he is afraid another war is coming and he looks for it on the radio.

Ulysses looks at them in anguish and returns to looking for stations on the radio.

Richard: He looks intelligent.

Robert: He understands everything.

Blas: He's afraid of the news and he's always listening for it. He is crazy.

Ulysses turns down the volume of the radio.

RADIO
BULLETIN: News Flash! A serious conflict has broken out between Greyhoundland and Bloodhoundland. The problem arose this morning during the Prime Minister's meeting which dealt with the problem of the North Section of the Southern Zone of Boneland which, as is well known, is neutral territory where there are many very juicy bones. The Bloodhoundland Minister said that the North section didn't belong to the Southern zone, and the Greyhoundland Minister answered that the Southern zone was not under the dominion of the North section. The East and West zones may complicate the question. The situation is so serious that relations may be broken any minute between Greyhoundland and Bloodhoundland.

Ulysses turns off the radio. He is very shaken.

Blas returns to the counter.

Blas: So what! It's not our problem.

Robert: Greyhoundland is very far away.

Richard: Bloodhoundland is very far away.

The children interrupt, quarreling over the ball.

Child I: Give me the ball.

Child II: I won't give it to you. You didn't lend me your roller skates.

Child I: And you didn't let me play with your horse.

Children: (In unison). I'm not lending you my toys again.

Child I: (To Richard). Papa, it's Conrad's fault.

Child II: It is Angelo's fault.

Richard: Come on, that's enough. Be quiet.

The children withdraw to one side of the stage.

Robert: Foolishness.

Richard: Kid stuff. (He drinks).

Robert looks at Richard and laughs.

Richard: What are you laughing about?

Robert: Your nose.

Richard: (Irritated). My nose? What's the matter with my nose?

Robert: (Still laughing). You got it wet in the beer.

Richard: I don't see what's funny.

Robert: You wet it in the beer because it is so big.

Richard: (He raises his hand to his nose). Big?

Robert: Very big. (He laughs and Richard begins to laugh too).

Robert: (Becomes serious). What are you laughing about?

Richard: Your nose.

Robert: My nose?

Richard: You didn't get it wet with beer.

Robert: And?

Richard: You didn't wet it because it is so short. Too short.

Robert: (He raises his hand to his nose). Too short? My nose is too short?

Richard: Yes. In other words, your nose is flat, maimed and mashed.

Robert: Well, your nose is hooked, in other words -- big, immense, infinite, and immeasurable.

Richard: Yours is vast, dilated, and spread out like a cauliflower.

Robert: Yours is long, like a day without bread.

Richard: Yours is short like your understanding. I always thought you couldn't see any farther than your nose.

Robert: You were always nasty to me. The Japanese girl! I knew her first.

Richard: Don't yell.

Robert: I'll yell whenever I want.

Blas: (Who happily follows the quarrel). Finally something interesting.

Robert: (He laughs). Each time your nose seems longer.

Richard: And yours shorter.

Robert: Your wife has crooked teeth.

Richard: Your sister is a bean pole.

Robert: Your mother-in-law is a hag.
Richard: Your Aunt Virginia is no virgin.
Robert: Wise guy.
Richard: Ignoramous.

Ulysses approaches and nervously turns the dials on the radio. From their corner of the stage, the children, who observe Richard and Robert also begin to trade insults.

Child I: (To Child II). Imbecile.
Child II: (To Child I). Idiot.
Robert: (To Richard). Worm.
Richard: (To Robert). Larva.
Child I: (To Child II). Beast.
Child II: (To Child I). Animal.
Robert: (To Richard). Creep.
Richard: (To Robert). Dummy -- Freak.
Child II: (To Child I). Tapeworm.
Child I: (To Child II). Toad.
Radio: The conflict between Greyhoundland and Bloodhoundland is not resolved. The situation is serious. A war could break out at any minute.

Ulysses turns off the radio roughly. He retreats, moaning.

Robert: (To Richard). Crowfoot!
Richard: (To Robert). Fetus!

Dark.

Act IScene III

Richard and Robert's houses, one on each side of the stage, and the street. Cecelia is seated in Robert's house, embroidering a bridal veil.

Cecelia: Crystals, many crystals -- crystals of love for when he comes near and crystals of sadness when he goes away. Crystals that tremble when he unveils me. Crystals that sing when he kisses me. Crystals of love for my veil. I have embroidered it in crystals and thus in them I shall reflect myself. This crystal will show me naked. And this one, for him covered with promises. (She raises and turns around, embraced by the veil). They shall twist, they shall dance, these crystals. (She wraps herself in the veil and the effect of the crystals colliding with one another is heard, mixed with the faint ringing of bells). All my crystals just for him, just for him when he will be near. (She takes off the veil. The same effect). A crystal for every moment that unites us. (She picks up imaginary crystals). Here he will take my hand. Here I shall be everything for him, and here we shall talk so much and about so many things that our words will tumble into each other, so that we'll run out of words. And here we shall be quiet...we shall be so quiet and so intense and we shall be so close to each other, that it will be one of those murmuring silences that after it passes, leaves forever an echo, an echo, an echo, forever an indellible echo. Oh, the echo of our silences. (Frightenedly). But the crystal breaks. One returns to reality sometimes. Be careful, the crystals. (She reacts). No, no, they will not break. Nobody will be able to break them. They will be shining and strong. Crystals in my veil and over my body, single faceted crystals. They will reflect only his image. One sad crystal and the other vibrant. This one transparent, and the other one metallic. One crystal for the day I first saw him and

another for the day of our death. Thus the veil will be everything for me. Crystals for the minutes not lived and for the noises that never come. Shining and harmonious crystals, crystals that ripple and sing, crystals that will reflect for him more and more images of me. (She resumes her work, embroidering the veil).

Dorothy Virginia enters. She is a thin and dried up spinster. She wears an eccentric dress with enormous yellow flowers. Her shoes are no less absurd. Her face is smeared with cosmetics. She shows her attire.

Dorothy: Look Cecelia...My dress for the wedding.

Cecelia: (As though waking up). Huh? Yes, Auntie.

Robert enters. He seems to be oppressed by an enormous weight. He raises his hand to his nose.

Robert: Short, too short, wide, flat. (He flops into a chair).

Dorothy: What's wrong Robert?

Cecelia: What's the matter?

Robert: (Pathetically). Sister...Aunt Dorothy...The situation is serious. Some very friendly relations have been ended today.

Cecelia: Yes, we heard on the radio that Greyhoundland and Bloodhoundland...

Robert: No, it's something more important. (He takes a mirror out of his pocket and observes his nose with a tragic expression). Short and real short.

Dorothy: What?

Robert: (He stands up). Cecelia, you are not marrying Leo.

Dorothy: My new dress!

Cecelia: (Still). What are you saying? (Instinctively pulling the veil against herself and retreating embraced by it).

Robert: And you, Aunt, break up your friendship with Angela.

Dorothy: I'll ask the priest.

Robert: That won't be necessary. Richard said that you, Aunt Dorothy Virginia,... (He speaks into her ear).

Dorothy: (Indignant). What? Oh! How is such an insult possible?

Robert: And there was more. Richard also said that...

Cecelia wraps herself in the veil. There is the sound of crystals hitting together. Robert and Dorothy continue gesturing and speaking without being heard.

Cecelia: I don't hear anything. It's marvelous. I don't hear anything.

The three people remain immobile. His mother-in-law, Angelina, and his wife, Angela, enter Richard's house. Angelina wears a dress as eccentric as Dorothy's with enormous red flowers. She is fat and excessively made up, decorated like a Christmas tree with loud colored bracelets, necklaces and earrings. Angela is submissive and dumb, about 30 years old and dressed in a seeming party dress.

Richard: (Entering). And he also said that you, Angelina, are a hag and that you, Angela, have crooked teeth.

Angelina: What?

Angela: I, crooked teeth?

Richard: It is decided. Leo is not marrying Cecelia.

Angelina & Angela: (At the same time, showing their outfits).
Oh my new dress!

Angelina: (She reacts). Despicable! Robert and his family are despicable!

Angela: What do they think?

Richard: Cretins.

Child I: (Entering). Daddy, Conrad called me an idiot.

Richard,
Angelina,
& Angela: (In unison). Scoundrels!

Everyone remains still while in Robert's house the characters regain their movement. Robert approaches Cecelia and takes the veil away from her. There is a jangling of crystals.

Robert: I'm sorry Cecelia. There will be no wedding.
(He throws the veil on the floor. The sound of breaking crystals is heard).

Cecelia: My crystals. You have broken them.

Dorothy: (To Cecelia). Your brother is right. Richard and his family are scoundrels.

Robert: Cretins.

Dorothy: Wicked.

Robert & Dorothy: (In unison, in attitudes similar to the people in the other house). Scoundrels!

The three remain immobile. The action is in Richard's house.

Angelina: We won't allow it.

Richard: I'll speak with the Bank President and the Mayor.

Robert, Dorothy and Cecelia recover their movement. There is now action in both houses. The characters in each one ignore the presence of the people in the other house.

Robert: I shall speak with the Mayor and the Bank President.

Richard: You, Angela, will talk to the President's wife.

Dorothy: I shall speak with the President's wife.

Richard: I'll speak to the school teacher.

Robert: I'll speak to the doctor.

Dorothy: With the priest.

Child I: Daddy, Conrad called me a tapeworm.

Richard: Attention, ready. (Angela and Angelina line up beside Richard like soldiers). Angelo. (They put him in line).

Robert: Attention, ready. (Dorothy runs to line up next to Robert. Cecelia doesn't move). Cecelia. (They put her in line).

Richard, Angela, & Angelina: (Advance simultaneously. In unison). Everyone here. Long noses here.

Robert & Dorothy: (Advance. In unison). Everyone here. Short noses here.

Child I: (Repeating what he heard). Long noses. (He leaves).

Cecelia: (Like a robot). Short noses. (She leaves).

In each house the characters gesture and talk excitedly while the doctor crosses the street triumphantly mounted on a

skateboard. He is more than 60 years old and has a monocle. He wears a plain suit, a tall hat, and brightly colored tie and socks. He does a pirouette, a movement that goes well with his skateboard. He looks at the sky and sighs, satisfied.

Doctor: Nothing like a little ride to enjoy a peaceful day.

He gets on his skateboard, does another turn along the street and disappears, while in the two houses, the characters continue talking with passionate gestures.

Act IScene IV

The Bank President's house and the street. The props are used as chairs and a table upstage. Downstage on a higher level, there is a cylindrical urn big enough to put a person in; it is Agatha's room. Gliding on skates at a waltz rhythm, two maids enter. They are between 30-40. They are dressed alike, uniforms, aprons, wrist bands, and bonnets. They keep their hands face up, each one holding imaginary trays from which they pretend to take their necessities for a tea service which they put on the table.

Maid I: Cups.

Maid II: Plates.

Maid I: Sugar.

Maid II: Silver teaspoons. (She looks toward the urn).
Hasn't she come out?

Maid I: (She looks toward the urn). She hasn't come
out yet.

Maid II: What is she doing inside the urn?

Maid I: She is shut away so dust can't get on her. She
is putting on creams and lotions. She rubs her-
self, polishes herself, and puts on finery. She
closes herself inside the urn so she won't damage
herself. Dust damages the wax.

Maid II: (With a stupid smirk). He, he, he...She is a
wax lady, he, he, he...(The urn door moves. This
makes a big impression on the maids. They stand
still paralyzed).

Maid I: The door!

Maid II: The urn!

Maid I: The lady.

Maid I & II: (In unison). The lady is coming out of her room. (They skate toward the urn and bend toward it, one on each side in deep bows, while they repeat in unison).

Maid I & II: (In unison). Madame. (The urn door opens).

There is the sound of trumpets, like that which announces the reading of a message by a herold accompanied by the appearance of Agatha. She is 30, dressed luxuriously. She is haughty and cold, with fine lips and brows and unflinching slanted eyes. She has an impenetrable face over which everything glides, as though it were made of wax. Her hands have long fingers and exaggerated nails. She puts forward a richly shod foot (diminutive if possible). The other foot advances. Parsimoniously Agatha comes down from the urn and walks between the maids, whom she addresses without looking at them.

Agatha: Gertrude, Gwendolyn. (The maids straighten up, but it is only in order to make another deep bow).

Maid I: Maam.

Maid II: Madame.

Agatha: I feel disarranged. I think my dress has a wrinkle in the hem and that a lock of hair from the right side fell on the left side of my part.

Maid I: Oh, Madam's dress. (She solicitously arranges the folds).

Maid II: Madam's coiffure. (She arranges her hair). (The maids revolve around on their skates with imaginary makeup equipment fixing Agatha.)

Maid I: Madam's eyes.

Maid II: Eyelashes.

Maid I: Lips.

Maid II: Bangs. Finished.

Maid I: Madame now isn't disarranged, nor does she have wrinkled clothes.

Agatha: (Unchanged). Is everything ready for tea?

Maid II: (Showing the table). Yes, Madame. Everything is ready, Madame.

Agatha: Check everything on the table. I don't want anything missing.

Maid I & II: (In unison). Yes, Madame... (Agatha leaves).
(The maids skate around the table. It looks like Gertrude's feet hurt. She sits down and takes off her skates. Agatha returns and surprises her).

Agatha: What's this, Gertrude? Haven't I taught you to walk properly; to slide elegantly?

Maid II: (She hurries to put the skates back on). Yes, Madame. You taught me to move properly, to slide elegantly. Excuse me, Madame. I won't forget again, Madame.

Agatha: I hope not... Well, now you may retire. When I give the signal, start to serve.

Maid I & II: (In unison). Yes, Madame. (They bow and retreat, skating. They disappear).

President: (Enters, approaching his wife lovingly).
You look pale, paler than usual. But I know how to take care of you, my love. Don't think I don't realize the responsibility of having such a delicate little darling wife. Agatha, my little woman. (He kisses her hand again).

Doctor: (Enters). How fragile, how yielding, how well made.

President: What is it my wife has, doctor?

Doctor: Nothing serious, my good friend. A passing indisposition. (He takes out his monocle in order to admire Agatha better).

President: Agatha is a jewel, doctor. (He looks at his rings). She is the most beautiful of my collection. That is why I bought her, without caring about the price.

Agatha: Thank you, Harold. Whenever you're ready... (She sits at the table and motions to the manager and doctor to accompany her. She claps three times; the maids appear, skating. With their imaginary trays, they pretend to serve tea).

Doctor: (He puts on his monocle again to admire the maids). What fascinating creatures, and how distinguished.

President: Agatha has taught them to glide elegantly.

Agatha: Gertrude, Gwendolyn, say hello to the doctor.

Maid I & II: (In unison, with slight reverence). Good afternoon, Doctor Reynolds, he, he, he. (They leave, giggling).

Doctor: What are they laughing about?

Agatha: They don't know.

President: They are happy.

Agatha: They are idiots. (They drink the tea. Suddenly Agatha speaks, as though referring to the rain and the nice weather).

Agatha: Próspero, my temporary indisposition will be a boy or girl within 6 or 7 months.

President: (His tea chokes him). What? A baby?

Doctor: Of course, of course, Próspero. A big surprise, isn't it?

President: (To his wife). But it has been 2 months that I haven't...or rather that you had not opened the door of your room for me.

Agatha: Exactly, darling. You were in my room two months ago.

President: (Bursting with happiness). Dear Agatha. (He rises and covers her with kisses).

Agatha: (Without changing). Drink your tea, dear, it is getting cold.

President: My son will be a Double U from the Double K.

Doctor: From the Double K?

President: My wife is of noble birth. That's why she cost me so much. Agatha is a Double U on her father's side and a Double K on her mother's side. I wasn't anybody. I started as a messenger boy. But now I am a wealthy man.

Agatha: Yes, dear. That's why I married you. (Richard and Robert barge into the room, hitting and fighting, each trying to enter before the other).

Robert: I came to ask to be moved, Mr. President.

Leo: (Enters). Mr. President, I came to ask for extra work. I'm going to marry Cecelia.

Richard & Robert: (To Leo). You will not get married.

Leo: Yes, we're getting married.

President: But what is this all about?

Robert: Mr. President, my affair is very serious.

Richard: (To the President). My affair is extremely grave.

Richard & Robert: (In unison). A matter of noses.

Agatha: I'm retiring. (She claps three times).

President: Don't retire, dear. (But Agatha goes toward the urn, followed by the maids who appear upon hearing the claps. She goes up to the urn, enters it and turns toward the other people. The maids bend forward in deep bows. The doctor devours the three women with his eyes).

Doctor: What fascinating creatures!

President: (Scratching, nervously). Agatha, dear, don't go. I had thought that tonight, just like two months ago, if you could receive me...

Agatha: I'm going to rest now. (The maids unite).

Maid I: Madame is going to rest.

Maid II: Madame needs rest. (They remain inclined toward their mistress).

President: Agatha, wait. (Agatha shuts the urn door in the President's nose).

Maid I & II: (They step together and say severely in unison). Madame has retired to her room. Good night, Mr. President. (They exit, skating. The doctor follows them and exits, wickedly, behind them. The President turns furiously to face his employees).

Richard: Mr. President, I have to talk to you.

Robert: Mr. President, I have to talk to you.

Richard,
Robert,
& Leo: (In unison). I have to talk to you, Mr. President.

The President puts his hands to his head and disappears, followed by Richard, Robert, and Leo. From the other side of the street, all at one time, Angelina with Angela and Cecelia and Dorothy enter. When one couple sees the other, they stop.

Angelina: (To Angela). The new dress. What ridiculous yellow flowers.

Dorothy: (To Cecelia). The new dress. It is nothing but ridiculous red flowers. (The couples cross).

Angela: (To Cecelia). Richard has forbidden me to talk to you.

Cecelia: (To Angela). Robert has forbidden me to talk to you but I want us to continue being friends.

Dorothy: (To Cecelia). Be quiet, you!

Angelina: (A gesture of disdain toward Dorothy). Hum!

Dorothy: (A gesture of disdain toward Angelina). Hum!

Both pairs disappear in opposite directions. Angelina and Dorothy, who is pulling Cecelia along, are very proud of themselves.

Dark.

Act IScene V

A sign that reads "school" lowers onto the stage. Richard goes toward the sign and pretends to rap with his knuckles while saying at the same time...

Richard: Knock, knock, knock.

The teacher enters. He is small in stature and comprehension; about 40. He carries a rather disarranged wig in his hand and takes some antiquated glasses from his pocket, both of which he puts on. In order to complete the picture, he exaggeratedly buries his nose in a book. Absorbed in his pretended reading, he pantomimes opening the door for Richard who is standing on the other side without seeing these preparations.

Richard: (Entering). Teacher, Mr. Jackson, you are very studious.

Teacher: (Solemn). One never stops learning, Richard. By the way (he shows the book), isn't this a mistake? 'Geoffrey' -- Is it written with a 'g' or a 'j'?

Richard: (He doubts). With a 'j', teacher, I believe with a 'j'.

Teacher: I thought so. Just like telephone is not spelled with a 'ph'. My English is perfect, in spite of the fact that my strong point is Spanish. I know all the irregular verbs, ser, soy, fui, tener, tengo, tuve. The word pneumonia begins with an 'n' and witch has no 't', just as I explained to my students this morning.

Richard: The school is in very good hands with you.

Teacher: Thank you, Richard.

Richard: Teacher, it has been reported to me that Robert is planning to meet his friends on Thursday afternoon in the Blas Cafe. I'm not going to let him get ahead of me. I too am calling on the main people of town, one of whom is you.

Teacher: Very kind. (Richard takes the teacher by the arm and walks away with him).

Richard: Between Robert and me things are going from bad to worse, teacher. Let me explain it to you. You, as the cultured and intelligent person that you are, will know how to understand me.

Teacher: Of course, Richardā, of course. (They exit).

A sign that says "Mayor's Office" lowers.

Robert: (Enters and pretends to knock). Knock, knock, knock, knock. (A pause, nobody comes out. He persists). Knock, knock, knock, knock. (A secretary of about 35-40 enters. She is aware of the importance of her role. Nothing will make her decide to hurry her pace. She makes a gesture of opening the door).

Robert: Good afternoon. Are you the secretary?

Secretary: May I help you? (Robert is going to speak but voices which come from off stage are heard distinctly).

Voices: Miss!

Miss!

Miss!

Miss!

Secretary: (As though answering everybody). Just a moment, just a moment, just a moment. There are moments for everybody. (She returns to Robert). Would you like to see the Mayor? (Without letting him answer). Just a moment, yes, sir, everybody, just one moment.

Voices: Miss!

Miss!

Secretary: Just a moment, just a moment. (To Robert)...
Just a moment. (She shuts the door in his face).

Robert: Miss! (He knocks). Knock, knock, knock. Miss!
(The secretary opens the door). Are you the
"just a moment" girl?

Secretary: Yes, sir, I am, don't you see it? The Mayor is
very busy. Just a moment. (She is going to shut
the door, but Robert stops it.)

Robert: I have to see him right now. It is urgent.

Secretary: Yes, it is always urgent but only for those who
are waiting. You already heard, there are a lot
of people waiting. But we can't rush ourselves.
(The Mayor enters).

Robert: Mr. Mayor, a serious conflict has arisen which
obliges me to resort to you as a renowned person
of this town.

Mayor: (Placated). Yes, very renowned, actually. Come
in, Robert, come in. (To the secretary)...Miss,
let our friend Robert come in.

Secretary: Yes, sir, I only told him to wait just a moment.
(The secretary steps aside and Robert enters).

Robert: Mr. Mayor, we need you on Thursday afternoon at
the Blas Cafe. (He looks around him and continues,
in confidence)...My partners will come prepared.

Mayor: Yes?

Robert: Yes.

Mayor: Come around here Robert. (To the secretary)...
Miss, let everyone wait a moment.

Secretary: (Happy). Yes, Mr. Mayor. With pleasure. (The
Mayor and Robert leave. The secretary heads
towards those who are waiting off stage).

Secretary: Just a moment, gentlemen, you will have to wait
a moment. Yes, everybody will get a moment.
(She disappears).

A sign lowers that says "Electrician". Richard enters and is going to knock on the door but at the moment the Electrician, who has just come in, pretends to open it and crosses the threshold of his doorway. He stretches, inflating his chest and flexing his biceps.

Electrician: Ah,...(He sees Richard)...The iron your mother-in-law brought isn't ready yet. I fixed Cecelia's aunt's first. (He approaches sighing). Cecelia. (He leaves).

Richard: (Running after him). Wait, Al, I have to talk to you about something very important.

Off stage -- Blas Cafe. The shoemaker enters. He is 70 and wears a work apron. He has a little beard which gives him a certain artistic air. He carries a box and a little bench. He sits down, takes a shoe and a hammer from the box and begins to nail while he sings in a low voice.

Shoemaker: I'll invite you
To dance with me
One of these nights
By the seashore.
(He hums the same tune and continues nailing while the sign "Shoemaker" lowers in front of him. Robert enters and knocks at the door).

Robert: Knock, knock, knock.

Shoemaker: Come in. (Robert enters). I'll invite you...
To dance with me...Robert, hello. I'm sorry,
but your Aunt Dorothy's shoes aren't ready.
(He continues singing)...One of these nights...
By the seashore.

Robert: (Pathetically). Shoemaker, my friend, Marvin,
I need you Thursday at the Blas Cafe.

Shoemaker: Yes?

Robert: Yes! (He grabs the shoemaker's box and approaches with it). I'll explain to you what you have to do.

Shoemaker: (He starts singing again). I'll invite you... To dance with me... (Richard makes a gesture of impatience)...I'm listening to you, Richard, I'm listening to you. Let's see, tell me, what is happening? What is it that I have to do? (They leave. The shoemaker's song continues to be heard offstage)...One of these nights...By the seashore...

A sign saying "Funerals" lowers. Richard enters and knocks.

Richard: Knock, knock, knock.

The owner of the Funeral Home enters, hurriedly, rubbing his hands. He is thin and depressing, with grey eyebrows and a certain air of a crow. As he hurries to open the door, he acts like a bird of prey. In front of the door he controls himself and composes his face into a responsible look. He opens the door.

Funeral Director: Good afternoon.

Richard: (Entering). Gaylord, you are as cheerful as usual.

Funeral Director: Not as much, Richard, not so much. Lately business hasn't been so good, what with antibiotics and gerontology. (His face lights up). But tell me, what brings you here? Your wife? By any chance did your wife die?

Richard: No.

Funeral Director: Your mother-in-law then?

Richard: Not her either.

Funeral Director: (Morbidly rubbing his hands). Perhaps the child?

Richard: No. (Pathetically). It is I, Gaylord, it is I.

Funeral Director: (Retreats). You?! You are the deceased?

Richard: It has nothing to do with being dead. I'm here to talk to you about a matter for the living, and it is very much alive.

Funeral Director: Ah, well then I don't like it.

Richard: (Approaching the funeral director). Come with me. I'll explain to you what it is about. I'm making a date with my friends on Thursday afternoon at the Blas Cafe. (They leave).

A sign that says "Church" appears.

Robert: (Enters and knocks). Knock, knock, knock.

The Priest enters with a beatific attitude. He goes to open the door. Richard enters at that moment. He meets Robert at the church door.

Richard: You here?

Robert: You here? (They lunge against each other).

Priest: (Comes and separates them). Calm, my sons, calm. Peace, a little peace.

Richard: There will never be peace between us again, Father. I know perfectly what brings Robert here. He hopes to influence you.

Robert: It is Richard who hopes to do the influencing.

Richard: Father, I beg you to listen to me.

Robert: Listen to me.

Priest: One after the other, my children. It will inevitably have to be one after the other.

Robert: Me first.

Richard: Me first.

Priest: We'll leave it to God's will. I shall listen first to the one who wants to help with the reconstruction of the Church. (He sticks one hand toward Richard and the other toward Robert. Both hurry to give him money, while he raises his eyes heavenward).

Curtain.

Act IIScene I

Blas Cafe -- There is violin music. On the darkened stage one light, little by little, illuminates Ulysses who is reclining on the counter. His arms hang down along his body as if he were a rag doll. As if the musical notes are calling him, he starts waking up. He sits up, takes a violin and continues playing the same music that he has been hearing. The mute's appearance is rather unreal. He doesn't have his knapsack and he isn't lame. A second circle of light comes up on Cecelia and Leo at the other end of the stage. They move their feet as though walking, without actually moving.

Cecelia: I like traveling with you. Are we far away?

Leo: We've crossed seas and highways.

Cecelia: Where are you taking me?

Leo: You choose.

Cecelia: A restaurant, close to the sea. We'll see boats with white sails.

Leo: Shall we go?

Cecelia: Let's go. (They continue walking. Cecelia acts tired. She leans on Leo).

Cecelia: We've been traveling a long time.

Leo: For years.

Cecelia: We had so many things to say to each other.

Leo: We used to.

Cecelia: Where were we going?

Leo: I don't remember anymore. (They stop walking. Ulysses holds still and the music stops. There is a silence).

Leo: The wall of your silence hurts.

Cecelia: All walls are high.

Leo: This one is the highest.

Cecelia: Because it is yours.

Leo: Because it is ours.

Cecelia: I didn't start it.

Leo: Neither did I.

Cecelia: Who was it then? Who did this to us?

Leo: You'll never know. One never knows who starts walls.

Cecelia: It is people.

Leo: It's things. Someone who passes.

Cecelia: Someone who steps on you.

Leo: And you are turned around. And you are no longer.

Cecelia: And you are no longer. Only the wall is there.

Leo: Of your silence. (A pause, they react and embrace). No, Cecelia, there won't be walls. Silence will never separate us. Look, we haven't traveled for years; we're young! And we have arrived! The restaurant near the sea. (He calls). Hey, let the music come!

Ulysses recovers his movement and happily begins an active tarantea. The lovers laugh, and whirl around to the music. Little by little the dance rhythm slows down, it returns to the melody from before. Along with the violin

music now is heard the noise of waves and the far away sound of fog horns.

Cecelia: Were you here before? Have you been in this place?

Leo: Many times in dreams. Can you see the ocean?

Cecelia: (She rubs the glass of an imaginary window).
Through the glass.

Leo: Do you like windows?

Cecelia: I like crystals. I have embroidered my veil again completely with crystals so that nobody will separate us. (They clasp hands and stand absorbed in one another. They freeze that way).

Slowly Ulysses retreats. The music nears the end and finishes. Ulysses has returned to stand in front of the counter. He leans on it and lets his arms fall again, like a puppet without strings. He remains stationary. The Mayor, Child II, the Secretary, the Bank President, Agatha, the First Maid, the Second Maid, the Doctor, the Teacher, the Electrician, the Shoemaker, the Funeral Director, and the Priest enter and form a semicircle behind Cecelia and Leo. Suddenly the entire stage lights up. The violin has disappeared. Ulysses sits up, embracing his knapsack. The people who enter laugh out loud, except the child, who will play by himself with the ball. Cecelia and Leo return to reality. Those surrounding them stop laughing and interrogate the couple.

Funeral Dir.: How dare you!

Mayor: Making love!

Priest: (Crossing himself). In broad daylight.

Teacher: (Expertly). In the afternoon light.

Secretary: After what has happened between your two families.

Electrician: (To Cecelia). If only you would love me...

Cecelia: And the violin, Ulysses? Where did you leave the violin? (Ulysses doesn't understand. He tries to show Leo and Cecelia his sympathy. He approaches them, again the usual Ulysses, dragging his injured leg and making strange guttural sounds).

Blas: What violin? Ulysses is an imbecile.

Leo: (To Cecelia). It was another dream, only a dream.

Shoemaker: A dream?

President: (To Cecelia and Leo). Who's talking about dreams? Have you forgotten perhaps, where you are and what day it is today?

Blas takes a sign that says "Thursday afternoon, Blas Cafe". He crosses the stage showing the sign to the audience while saying in unison with all the characters except Leo and Cecelia.

Unison: Everyone except Leo and Cecelia. Thursday afternoon at the Blas Cafe. (Blas puts the sign down).

Cecelia: (Discouraged). Thursday afternoon.

Leo: (Discouraged). Blas Cafe.

Cecelia: The boats don't exist. The sails aren't white.

Leo: There are spiders.

Cecelia: There are worms.

Leo: There are people.

Cecelia: Everybody is against us. Everybody is fighting. (Ulysses tries to tell Cecelia and Leo that he isn't against them, but he isn't able to).

Cecelia: (Affectionately). Yes, Ulysses. We already know that you aren't against us. Thank you.

Leo: Thanks, Ulysses. We already know that you don't want to fight.

President: Who doesn't want to fight? That is foolishness.

Blas: Scram, Ulysses. Don't bother us. (Dragging his lame leg, he withdraws. He will remain separated).

Mayor: We all want to fight. We live in the 20th Century. We're atomic.

Teacher: (Pedantly). Supersonic.

Electrician: (He amends). Infrasonic.

Fun. Dir.: Carbonic and antagonic.

Leo: Enough!

With this, a series of murmurs is heard. Richard has just appeared. He makes a solemn entrance followed by Angelina, Angela, and Child I. They form a group on one edge of the stage. Blas knocks three times on the floor and proclaims, as though presenting the contestants in a boxing match...

Blas: In this corner...the long noses. (Richard, his wife, and his mother-in-law salute very pompously. They make Child I salute too).

Angela: (She is still). But Richard, I don't think I have a long nose.

Richard: (Still). Be quiet. That is not important.

They stop bowing at the moment that Robert and Dorothy appear. They make the same entrance, accompanied by murmurs. They head for the other side of the stage.

Dorothy: Cecelia, come here. (Cecelia obeys and goes to join her aunt and brother. Blas gives the same three knocks and announces again).

Blas: In this corner...the short noses. (Bows from Robert and Dorothy. They make Cecelia bow too).

Now the children have forgotten their fight and play with the ball. They leave. Richard and Robert advance toward each other, attacking each other.

Richard: I gathered all these people.

Robert: I gathered them. They are all with me.

Richard: They're all with me.

Robert: We'll see. He raises his hand toward his pocket as though taking out a gun. We came prepared!

Richard: (Same gesture). We came prepared! (Everybody except Leo and Cecelia make the same gesture of getting ready to take out guns and say in unison)...

Unison: We came prepared! (From his corner Ulysses groans).

Leo: What are you doing? Stop it. This fight is absurd. (The characters continue their threatening attitudes with impatient gestures. Several voices condemn Leo's intervention).

Voices: Oh.
Get out of here.
It must have been Leo.

Richard: (Solemnly). Leo, if all of us are gathered here with our wives and children, it is because it is a solemn occasion. I assume you won't forget that you are my brother and to what side you belong.

Leo: At least explain your reasons. Talk before you fight.

Several
Voices: Yes.
Yes, let Robert talk.
Let Richard talk.
Get up Richard. (Applause and whistles.
Richard bows, pleased).

Another
Voice: Get up, Robert. (Applause and whistles. Robert bows too).

Mayor: We'll listen to both.

Richard: Everybody knows the situation. I have nothing to explain.

Robert: Nor do I.

Richard: But I would like to remind you that throughout history, through the centuries, we long noses have been more renowned, strong, honored, and powerful, and we have obtained for our countries more fame and more glory than the short noses. (Exclamations of approval and disapproval... Cecelia and Leo don't participate. They remain apart as does Ulysses). Yes, gentlemen, it is something that has come through the centuries; Alexander the Great, Cervantes, Dante, Washington, and Cyrano de Bergerac had long noses. (New exclamations, the opinions are divided. Ulysses laughs nervously).

Robert: One moment, all this is false. The most renowned, strongest, honored, and powerful, those of us who have obtained for their countries the most fame and glory have been the short noses. Socrates, Confucious, Maxim Gorki and Kennedy didn't have aquiline noses. (There is another diversity of comments and a little giggle from Ulysses).

Robert: (Accusingly). Mephistopheles has a long nose. (The priest crosses himself).

Priest: My children, this business of long and short noses is a relative thing...a matter of taste. Besides, what is important isn't that these gentlemen had long or short noses, but rather

how they thought. To what band they belonged, to the good or the bad side.

Richard: Yes, what you ought to decide is to which side you belong. (Pointing to himself)...to the good (He points to Robert)...or to the bad.

Robert: (Same game, pointing to Richard)...to the bad (He points to himself)...or to the good.

Dorothy: Let the priest decide.

Voices: Yes.
Yes, we'll listen to the priest.

Priest: My children, after meditating about this matter very carefully, considering the moral qualities of our brothers Richard and Robert, and after having prayed for these two lost lambs, I think that the right one is...(a little pause, expectation among the listeners)...Richard. (A difference of opinion among the listeners, applause and protests).

Priest: Just a minute, my children, I haven't finished.

Several
Voices: Let the priest finish.
Quiet.
Let him talk.

Priest: After having prayed for these two lost lambs, I think that also Robert is right. (A new diversity of opinion).

Mayor: It had to be. The church never compromises itself.

Electrician: Let everyone say whose side they are on.

Several
Voices: Yes, that's it.
Let's all talk.
Everybody.

The teacher steps forward. He takes a wand out of his pocket and begins to conduct the orchestra as though in front of the children in his class.

Teacher: Come on, gentlemen, everybody at once, I am for...everybody go on three. One...Two...Three...

Unison: (Everyone except Cecelia, Leo and Ulysses).
I am for... (Here some people say Robert and
some Richard. It can't be understood in whose
favor they are. Ignoring what is happening,
the children enter again making the ball bounce
across the stage).

Shoemaker: I didn't understand anything.

Doctor: (To the maids). Beautiful creatures, what was
it you were saying?

Maids I & II: He, he, he...he, he, he.

Fun. Dir.: (To the Secretary). You, Miss. Who are you
with?

Secretary: Just a moment, please, just a moment.

Robert: Well, let's clear this up. (He steps forward).
Here, those on my side. (Dorothy grabs Cecelia
and both go to stand next to Robert. They stand
still forming a semicircle at one side of the
stage).

Richard: (He steps forward). My followers here.

Angela: Angelo. (She takes Child I by the hand and
together with Angelina, goes to stand at Richard's
side. They form a semicircle at the other side
of the stage).

Mayor: Conrad, you're with me! Child II goes near the
mayor.

Richard &
Robert: (Together). Those who are with me step forward.
(The remaining people approach Richard and
Robert, thus completing a closed circle. Leo
also approaches; he remains inside the circle far
from Cecelia...Both appear downcast. They move
mechanically. Ulysses's laugh is heard like a
wail. Several voices tell him to be quiet).

Voices: SHHHHHH
Silence.
Be quiet.

Mayor: As the representative of the authority, I shall
give the signal.

Priest: Perhaps a prayer would be appropriate first.

Shoemaker: Nothing doing with prayers!

Electrician: (The same as the first time, raises his hand toward his pocket as though to take out a weapon). Action! (Everyone except Ulysses, Cecelia, Leo and the children make the same gesture and repeat in unison)...

All: Action! (Ulysses, anguished, breaks into the center of the circle and goes from one to another trying to tell them not to fight, but everyone pushes him away).

Several
Voices: Scram!
Get out!
Don't bother us!
(Finally they push him outside the circle. Stumbling, he leaves and stops at the far edge of the stage).

Mayor: (As though giving military orders). Ready!
Now! (All at the same time the characters turn halfway around, maintaining their positions in the circle, and take something from their pockets).

Mayor: Ready! Now!

All at the same time, everyone puts on what they took from their pockets, an artificial nose, long for some, short for others. They are exaggerated caricature noses which serve to clearly define to which side each person belongs. Cecelia sobs while Dorothy watches as she puts on her nose. Leo puts on his nose and slowly, very dejectedly goes toward one end of the stage. The parents make the children put on their noses. They protest and refuse, but have to give in. The circle is broken and everyone looks around suspiciously discovering to which side they belong. The characters who wear long noses are Richard, Angela, Angelina, Agatha, Child I, Leo, the President, First Maid, Priest, Shoemaker and Blas. The characters who wear short noses are Robert, Dorothy,

Cecelia, the Mayor, Child II, the Secretary, the School Teacher, the Doctor, the Electrician, the Second Maid, and the Funeral Director. They begin to harrangue one another.

Agatha: (To the Second Maid). Gertrude, you are disobeying me, eh?

Maid II: (She takes off the skates). Ha, ha, ha. Yes, Madame. I disobey you. Look, Madame, now I'm not walking elegantly. Hah, ha, ha. (She begins to walk in front of Agatha, raising and lowering her feet noisily).

Agatha: (Scandalized). But this is an insurrection.

Maid II: Yes, Madame. Ha, ha, ha.

Maid I: Madame, I don't disobey. Look Madame, he, he, he. (The two maids move around near Agatha, the first with skates, the second without. The doctor watches them).

Doctor: I like the one with the short nose as much as the one with the long nose.

Angelina: (To Angela). My daughter, the long nose is a symbol. It is the only one, because of tradition, that our family could have selected. In our family, we have always been decent.

Angela: Yes, Mama.

Dorothy: (To Angelina). Aren't you ashamed to be on your son-in-law's side?

Angela: (To the Electrician). I knew ever since you chose to fix Dorothy's iron first.

Robert: (To the Shoemaker). And to think that since my childhood you had fixed my shoes.

Dorothy: (To Agatha). Made out of wax or not, I never could stand you.

Mayor: (To the President). Harold, you're making a grave mistake.

President: (Scratching himself nervously). Mr. Mayor, let me explain...(The Mayor turns his back).

Mayor: Hum! (The Secretary turns her back to Richard).
Secretary: Hum!
Richard: (To the Secretary). I never liked this business of the "just a moments".

Everyone talks, discusses and insults each other at the same time. The children, who observe this, begin to fight too. Child I takes Child II's ball.

Child II: I'll break your nose, no matter how long it is.
Child I: I'll break yours.

Leo with his long nose approaches. He finds himself in front of Cecelia who is mortified by her short nose.

Leo: I can't help it, Cecelia. I'm a long nose.

Cecelia: I can't help it, Leo. I'm a short nose.

Leo: (He reacts and takes off the nose). I will not fight. I don't believe in sides or divisions or distinctions between men. (Ulysses applauds with enthusiasm).

Electrician: Ulysses hasn't put on a nose. Grab him!

Voices: Yes.
Grab him.
Ulysses.
(Frightened, Ulysses speeds up his steps, dragging the injured leg).

Richard: Let him go.

Robert: He's no good. Let's not waste time. Come with me, short noses. (Dorothy brings Cecelia with her and the short noses form a group on one side of the stage).

Richard: There's no time to lose. Come with me, long noses. (The long noses form a group on the other side. Leo comes forward and turns toward both sides).

Leo: Enough! Don't you understand? The difference in the noses doesn't matter. (Several voices interrupt him)...

Voices: Bah!
Ugh!
Of course it matters!
You better be quiet.
(Ulysses enters again. He seems pleased by the following speech by Leo).

Leo: In the world there is a place for everyone, do you understand? Long noses as well as short noses. Life is beautiful. There are mountains that seem to grow, fields that wait, and rushes on the riverbanks and insects that must not be destroyed. There is that sound, that reflection, that hour of the afternoon...Life is beautiful. Don't you understand? We are all brothers. We all should live in peace. (Ulysses and Cecelia applaud, but the rest laugh in unison)...

Others: Ha, ha, ha, ha. Peace!! Ha, ha, ha, ha. We are all brothers! Ha, ha, ha, ha. Peace.
(Leo leaves disheartened. Cecelia takes off her nose and follows Leo).

Cecelia: Leo wait. (She leaves after him).

The participants of each group keep talking among themselves with exaggerated gestures. Ulysses nervously turns the buttons of the radio which he pulled from his knapsack, and from which unintelligible noises are coming. Blas leaves the long nose group. He crosses the stage toward the other group with cautious steps like the big bad wolf in children's cartoons. The Funeral Director leaves the short nose group. With the same steps, he crosses toward the other group. Both stop, one on each side.

Blas: (To the audience). I am the traitor.

Director: (To the audience). A traitor is always useful in these cases. I am a traitor...

Blas changes his long nose for a short one. The Funeral Director removes the nose he is wearing and puts on a long one. Both join the opposite sides to which they belonged.

Director: (To the long noses). I'm with you.

Blas: (To the short noses). I'm with you.

Immediately, the pair crosses the stage with the same cautious steps, but much more rapidly, toward the sides they first belonged. They stop in the middle, back to back, to put on the original noses. They rejoin their groups, Blas, the long noses, and the Funeral Director, the short noses. On both sides several voices are heard while the children re-enter and go from one to another without understanding.

Voices: We shall defend our principles.
Our families.
Our rights.
We shall fight.
We'll win.
Noses.
Countries.
Short.
Long.
Sacred rights.

Priest: Lord, help those of us who are with you.

Radio: Yes, the news has been confirmed. Special up-to-date bulletin from our services PDJ. Yes, Greyhoundland declared war on Bloodhoundland. Attention, latest news. As it was feared, the difficulties between the two nations could not be resolved and war has broken out.

Ulysses, terrorized, turns off the radio. Various voices from both sides are heard...

Voices: What horror!
What barbarity!
Greyhoundland at war with Bloodhoundland!

Immediately all the adults in unison say...

All: So what! It isn't our problem.

The parents make the children join their sides.

Richard: Angelo, you'll do the same as I do.

Mayor: You'll do the same things I do, Conrad.

Short Noses: (In unison). War on the long noses.

Long Noses: (In unison). War on the short noses.

They remain motionless, in threatening poses. The children immitate their parents. Ulysses moans and flees, dragging his leg.

Dark.

Act IIScene II

Richard and Robert's houses. In the latter's house are found Dorothy, the Mayor, the Secretary, Teacher, Doctor, Electrician, Second Maid, and the Funeral Director, all with their short noses in place. In Richard's house are he, Angela, Angelina, the Bank President, Agatha, the First Maid, the Priest, Shoemaker, and Blas, all with their long noses on. The characters in Robert's house remain still. There is action in Richard's house.

Richard: This house is our general headquarters. We shall win. We have supporters all over town.

Everyone: (In unison). All over town.

President: My friend, the manager of the finance company...

Richard: (Continuing)...and my friends in the bank...

Angelina: ...and Cindy, the one from Eighth Street...

Agatha: ...and my manicurist...

Maid I: (Skating)...He, he, he, and my friend, Jeanie who works across the street...

Shoemaker: ...and my friend the painter who a year ago came to town for a week...

Angela: ...and Phyllis, Harriet's cousin...

Priest: ...and the Sexton...

Everyone: (In unison). They're with us.

Richard: (Solemnly). Friends, the situation is serious. The short noses are thinking.

Voices: (Repeat quietly, like an echo)...
They are thinking.
They are thinking.

Richard: The short noses are plotting a plan of attack.

Voices: (Repeat quietly)...
They are plotting
A plan of attack.

Richard: Let's not get behind. We shall prepare an
attack too. Let's think.

Voices: Yes, let's think!
Let's think!

Everyone: (In unison). Let's think!

In solemn pensive poses, they remain motionless.
There is action in Robert's house where a scene begins similar to the former.

Robert: This house is our general headquarters. We
shall win. We have supporters all over town.

Everyone: (In unison). All over town.

Mayor: My friend and (stressing it) "subordinate" the
police chief...

Robert: (Continuing)...and my friends at the bank...

Secretary: ...and Marlene, Mr. Lewis's so called "niece"...

Maid II: (She shows her skates which she is not wearing)
...He, he, he, and my friend Eunice. who works
next door...

Doctor: ...and my podiatrist...

Teacher: ...and my School Inspector...

Electrician: ...and the Butcher...

Fun. Dir.: ...and the Undertaker...

Everyone: (In unison). They are all with us.

Robert: Friends, the situation is serious, grave. The long noses are thinking.

Voices: (Several low voices repeat, then silence).
They are thinking.
They are thinking.

Robert: (Solemnly). We should think too!

Everyone: (In unison). Let's think!

They take the same pensive poses as the long noses. The long noses start moving again. Now there is action in both houses. Richard and Robert stand up; something has just occurred to them.

Richard & Robert: (In unison). That's it! I know how to finish them!

Richard: It will be the perfect punishment.

Robert: It will be an irreparable blow.

Richard: Listen everybody. I'm going to explain to you.

Robert: Come here, I'll explain to you what we're going to do.

In each house a group is formed around Richard and Robert who each explain something to their compatriots. Everyone listens, showing signs of approval...On both sides voices are heard.

Voice: (From the short noses). Oh!

Voice: (From the long noses). Ah!

Voice: (From the short noses). Oh!

Voice: (From the long noses). Yes, very good!
Voice: (From the short noses). Very good.
Voice: (From the long noses). That's what we'll do!

At the same time, Blas and the Funeral Director move away surreptitiously on tiptoe, changing their noses for the other. They leave while the action proceeds.

Long Noses: (In unison). It will be a perfect punishment.
Short Noses: (In unison). An irreparable blow.

The two groups continue talking and congratulating themselves. Blas hurriedly enters Robert's house with a short nose.

Blas: Robert, I came to tell you as soon as possible. The long noses plan to burn your house. (Dorothy faints. The Secretary and Maid II lift her up and take her away. There is general confusion in Robert's house).

Fun. Dir.: (Enters Richard's house with a long nose). Richard, I came to tell you as soon as possible. The short noses plan to rape your wife. (Angela faints. Angelina, Agatha, and the First Maid pick her up and take her away. There is general confusion in Richard's house).

Robert: The bridge! To get here they have to cross the bridge. We'll defend the bridge. (There are murmurs of approval from his followers).

Richard: They have to cross the bridge. We'll defend the bridge. (There are murmurs of approval from his followers).

Mayor: From this moment, nobody crosses the bridge.

President: Don't let anybody cross.

All: (Everyone in both houses, in unison)...The
bridge! Death to anybody who crosses the
bridge.

Dark.

Act IIScene III

The bridge stretches from one edge of the stage to the other with steps or ramps on both sides. A spotlight is above Ulysses who once again has changed to a violinist. He plays the same music as in the Blas Cafe at the beginning of the act. He doesn't have on his artificial nose. He carries a bouquet of violets.

Leo: For you, Cecelia. They are violets. (He leaves).

The violin stops and Ulysses disappears. On one side, cautiously, with their noses in place, first Robert and immediately following looking over each other's shoulders come the Mayor, the Teacher, the Doctor, the Electrician, and the Funeral Director. Robert advances a few steps. He looks all around. He whirls toward his group who haven't moved.

Robert: Nobody will cross the bridge!

All: (Mayor, Teacher, Doctor, Electrician, Funeral Director, in unison). Nobody will cross!

Robert: Death!

All: (Mayor, Teacher, Doctor, Electrician, Funeral Director, in unison). Death! (Robert gives them a signal to keep quiet).

Robert: Shhhhhh! (Each person whirls to see who is behind him, making a signal to keep quiet, which everyone repeats in unison).

All: (Mayor, Teacher, Doctor, Electrician, Funeral Director, in unison). Shhhhhh!

The short noses leave on tiptoe. From the other side cautiously approaching with their long noses in place, first Richard, and immediately following, each one turning their heads over each other's shoulders, come the Bank President, the Priest, the Shoemaker and Blas. The same game as the short noses, Richard advances a few steps, looks around, whirls toward his group, who haven't moved.

Richard: Nobody will cross the bridge.

All: (President, Priest, Shoemaker, Blas, in unison).
Nobody will cross.

Richard: Death!

All: (President, Priest, Shoemaker, Blas, in unison).
Death! (Richard makes a signal to keep quiet).

Richard: Shhhhhh. (The President whirls to see the Priest, the Priest toward the Shoemaker, and he toward Blas, each making a sign to keep quiet while they repeat in unison).

All: (President, Priest, Shoemaker, Blas, in unison).
Shhhhhh.

The long noses leave on tiptoe. The spotlight comes up on Ulysses and the violin, playing beautiful music. Leo enters. He walks up the steps of the bridge decisively. He arrives at the top with a bouquet of violets.

Leo: Cecelia.

When he starts to go down the other side of the bridge, the short noses enter menacingly. The violin is suddenly interrupted and the stage lights go down. Ulysses disappears. More than the characters, the silhouettes will stand out, it is their shadows that are seen in the following scene. The short noses advance. Leo retreats. He goes back up the steps of the bridge. He arrives at the top. He starts to go down the other side, but the long noses appear in front of him. They advance, threateningly. Leo turns to retreat towards the top of the bridge.

Short Noses: (In unison). He wants to cross the bridge...
he is an enemy!

Long Noses: (In unison). He wants to cross the bridge...
he is an enemy.

Leo leaps to the center of the stage. The two groups advance toward him. The men of both groups surround him and cover him up. Now Leo cannot be seen. Everyone falls on him. They hit him. A stifled moan is heard. Then there is a silence. The men get up. They slowly separate, each group to opposite sides. At the back, Richard and Robert, who had remained entangled, fighting, stop. In the center, lying on the floor is Leo, dead. The bouquet of violets is left on one side. Quietly several voices on both sides are heard. They are the men who speak abashed, hardly daring to move their lips.

Voices: It's Leo.
Leo.
He's dead.
Dead.

Richard: (Approaching the dead man). Leo...

Robert: He wasn't carrying a spear.

President: He didn't carry a shield.

Mayor: He wasn't wearing a badge.

Teacher: He wasn't wearing his nose.

All: (In unison). He wasn't coming as an enemy.

Shoemaker: Violets...They are violets! (For a few seconds only the bouquet of violets remain illuminated. Then everything is).

Dark.

Act IIScene IV

Funeral home. A wooden coffin is on the floor in the middle of the stage. With their long noses on the Bank President, Priest, Shoemaker, Blas, Angela, Angelina, Agatha, and Maid I, who is skating, enter. They place themselves on one side of the coffin and look around, adopting innocent looks.

Priest: Lord, have pity on him.

Long Noses: (In unison). Lord, have pity on him.

Priest: Jesus Christ, have pity on him.

Long Noses: (In unison). Jesus Christ, have pity on him.

Priest: Lord, have pity on him.

Long Noses: (In unison). Lord, have pity on him.

They continue praying, in low voices. With their short noses on, the Mayor, the Teacher, the Doctor, the Electrician, the Funeral Director, Dorothy, the Secretary, and the 2nd Maid who is not wearing skates, enter. The Funeral Director glances with satisfaction at the coffin and rubs his hands.

Fun. Dir.: It's going to be a good day.

The short noses arrange themselves on the other side of the coffin and adopt the same air of innocence as the long noses.

Dorothy: Jesus Christ, have pity on him.

Short Noses: (In unison). Jesus Christ, have pity on him.

Dorothy: Lord, have pity on him.

Short Noses: (In unison). Lord, have pity on him.

Dorothy: Holy Mary, pray for him.

Short Noses: (In unison). Holy Mary, pray for him.

They continue praying in low voices. Suddenly both groups become quiet. They stand up and each side approaches the other. From each side of the coffin they glare at each other. They return to their places. They sit down and continue praying in low voices. In a little while, a voice is heard.

Voice: He lived alone. (On both sides several voices repeat, quietly, like an echo)...

Voices: Alone.
Alone.
Alone.

Angela: He had a Chinese trunk in his house.

Priest: A candelabra without candles.

Fun. Dir.: A frame without a mirror and a leg off of a piece of furniture.

Everyone: (In unison). They say he was a poet.

Richard enters hoisting a banner that says, "War on the short noses" and Robert enters with another banner that reads, "War on the long noses"! Immediately their respective compatriots stand up and join them...To the beat of a muffled roll of drums, they begin two military parades on each side of the coffin, with Richard and Robert at the head of each group. Without the other characters noticing them, Blas and the Funeral Director advance to each side of the stage and begin a kind of game. They take a nose from their pockets, take off the one they're wearing, put it away and put on the other. They take the first nose again, take off the one they are wearing, put it away, and put on the other one. They do this several times with rhythmic movements. They finally end up with the noses they wore when they stepped forward and very seriously, each one joins his side. The marching continues to the sound of the drums while off stage, a voice is heard on the radio.

Radio: 557 dead and more than 700 wounded is the toll of the battle engagement yesterday, one more day in the war between Greyhoundland and Bloodhoundland. The governments of both countries have announced that they will bestow medals on the relatives of the soldiers who died in combat.

Ulysses enters, again with his knapsack and again limping, and the children enter showing the radio.

Child I: The radio.

Child II: Ulysses loaned us the radio.

The three stop to see the coffin. They are the only ones to notice the presence of the dead man. The Mayor and Angela notice that the children are not wearing their noses and they leave the line of marchers to go toward the children.

Mayor: Conrad, how dare you come this way?

Angela: Angelo, come and put on your nose immediately.

In spite of the protests of the children, they force them to put on their noses and immediately each returns to rejoin his side. The children remain in front of the coffin. Ulysses tries to tell the marchers to forget their quarrels. He points to the coffin, then the radio, which had brought the news of the war and deaths. He goes from one to another. His lips tremble and an unintelligible guttural sound comes from his mouth. Several voices yell at him.

Voices: Go away, Ulysses!
 Don't bother us!
 Get out of here! We're busy!

Dragging his leg, Ulysses retreats. The people on both sides stop marching and now approach the coffin from side to side.

Short Noses: (In unison). It was the long noses!

Long Noses: (In unison). It was the short noses!

Everyone: (In unison). It wasn't our fault! (The children keep quiet. They continue looking at the coffin).

Child II: He's dead.

Child I: Poor Leo! (There is a silence. Child II gives the radio to the other child).

Child II: Take it. I'm letting you have it. You may keep it.

Child I: No, you keep it. O.K., it will be both of ours.

They go to join Ulysses, the cripple, and remain with him apart, without participating in the following scene.

There is another silence. Richard puts down his banner.

Richard: My poor brother. (Robert puts down his banner too. The electrician approaches Richard).

Electrician: Richard, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

Richard: Thank you.

Everyone: (All except Richard and the electrician, in unison)...He spoke to him!

Long Noses: (In unison). A short nose has spoken to a long nose.

Short Noses: (In unison). A long nose has spoken to a short nose.

Everyone: (All except Richard and the electrician, in unison)...He spoke to him!

Dorothy and Angelina bump against each other.

Angelina: Oh, excuse me.

Dorothy: Pardon me.
Angelina: It was my fault.
Dorothy: No, it was mine. Go ahead.
Angelina: No, you go.
Dorothy: I'm sorry... (She goes forward a few steps. She stops, returns and faces Richard)... I'm sorry Richard. (The other characters face Richard too).
Priest: I'm sorry.
Doctor: I'm sorry.
Teacher: I'm sorry.
All: (At once). I'm sorry.
Richard: Thank you, thank you all.

On stage the long and short noses have mixed together.

President: Mr. Mayor, on my part there was never anything personal against you.
Mayor: Nothing personal against you, Harold.
Electrician: (To Angelina). All right, I fixed the iron that was brought to me first.
Shoemaker: (Pathetically). Yes, Robert, it's true. When you were a child, I used to fix your shoes.
Dorothy: (Ashamedly). Angela, your red flowered dress...
Angelina: (In the same tone). Dorothy, your yellow flowered dress...
Dorothy & Angelina: (In unison). It wasn't that ridiculous.
Fun. Dir.: (Seeing the coffin and rubbing his hands). It is a good day today! I feel disposed to reconcile myself with everybody.
Everyone: (In unison). I forgive, you forgive, he forgives...

Radio: We interrupt this program for another bulletin from our special services. A few hours ago Greyhoundland and Bloodhoundland arrived at an agreement and the order for a cease fire has been given. (There are exclamations. Everyone pays attention). Soon the time and place will be known for the meeting of the Prime Minister of Greyhoundland and the Prime Minister of Bloodhoundland to sign the peace treaty and apportion Boneland. The eyes of all nations are on Greyhoundland and Bloodhoundland as models to follow. His Holiness, the Pope, has sent his benefiction... (a pause)...Yes, folks, at last, peace!

The children turn off the radio. Ulysses happily laughs and claps his hands. He will leave with the children while several voices are heard.

Voices: Peace.
Peace.
There won't be war any more.
Peace.

Angelina: My dear Dorothy, Angela and I will come to visit you one of these days, right, Richard?

Dorothy: My dear Angelina, Cecelia and I will be happy to receive you, right, Robert?

Richard and Robert exchange smiles...

Richard: Heh, heh.

Robert: Heh, heh.

Second Maid: (Putting on her skates). Ha, ha, ha. Look, Madame, now I'm walking properly again. Now I'm gliding elegantly again. She skates in front of Agatha.

Agatha: Very good, Gertrude, very good.

Second Maid: Ha, ha, ha.

First Maid: He, he, he.

Agatha: (Correcting them). Ha, ha, ha...ha, ha, ha.

First Maid: Ha, ha, ha.

Second Maid: Ha, ha, ha.

Everyone: (In unison). Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Fun. Dir.: (Going from one to another). Make yourselves comfortable, make yourselves comfortable, you're at home here. A cup of coffee?

Secretary: I'll go look for one. Good. I'll be back in just a moment, please, just a moment.

President: (Stepping forward). Ladies and gentlemen, a happy announcement. Agatha, would you come here? (Without losing her composure, Agatha approaches and the President proceeds, bursting with pride). My wife is expecting a child.

Several
Voices: A child!
The wax woman!
A wax child!

President: (Pompously). Not just any child! My child!
There will be a double "U" from the double "K".

Several
Voices: His child.
A double "U" from the double "K".
Congratulations.
Congratulations.

Everyone: (In unison). Congratulations!

Priest: My children, the moment has come to take off our noses.

Several
Voices: Yes!
Take off the noses!
Take off the noses!

Child I: (Entering). Take them away.

Child II: (Entering). Take away the noses.

Robert: I agree.

Richard: I agree. (Solemnly). Come here followers!

Robert: My followers here! (The children go to rejoin their parents and each person joins his side. In their hurry, someone bumps into the dead man's casket).

Fun. Dir.: Careful. Careful with the deceased. (Various voices comment).

Voices: Ah, yes, the body.
What a nuisance.
What a bother.

Teacher: He who is born, must die, the dictionary says so.

Doctor: Yes, it is an everyday thing.

Fun. Dir.: Be careful not to bump into the deceased.

The long noses and short noses have formed two groups on either side of the coffin. The Mayor gives commands.

Mayor: Ready! Now! (Everyone turns halfway around at the same time).

Mayor: Ready! Now! (Everyone removes his artificial nose. Immediately the children repeat the game from the first act. They shake hands and say their rhyme in unison).

Children: Together and pals. I'll share all my toys.
(They leave. The characters on stage look at one another and discover how much they love each other).

Teacher: My dear Richard!

Richard: Teacher! (They embrace).

President: My dear Robert!

Robert: Mr. President! (They embrace).

President: Mr. Mayor!

Mayor: Próspero! (They embrace).

First Maid: (To Agatha). Madame. (She kisses her).

Second Maid: (To Agatha). Madame. (She kisses her).

Doctor: Madame, Gertrude, Gwendolyn. (He takes advantage of kissing all three).

There is great euphoria. Everyone embraces one another. They kiss the Priest's hand, who doles out blessings.

Robert: Richard, your nose isn't so long.

Richard: Your nose isn't so short, Robert. (They embrace too).

Everyone: (In unison). I love, you love, he loves.

A Voice: Let's celebrate.

Voices: Yes, let's celebrate. Let's celebrate!

There is jubilation on the stage. Everyone begins to dance around the coffin. Ulysses enters and tries to make them stop. He goes from one to another pointing out the dead man's casket and making pitiful moans. Nobody pays attention to him. Finally the dance ends.

Teacher: Our fight was foolish.

Mayor: Absurd.

Doctor: A matter of noses.

Priest: The same as the war between Greyhoundland and Bloodhoundland.

Electrician: The same as short people fighting the tall people.

Mayor: Those who wear moustaches against those who don't.

Electrician: The tall against the short ones.

Shoemaker: Those who have beards against those who don't.

Electrician: The tall against the short people.

Teacher: The short against the tall ones. (To the electrician, aggressively)...What did you say? Tall against short people?

Electrician: And what did you say, the short people against the tall?

Teacher: How dare you? Are you speaking ill of short people?

Electrician: And you of tall people?

Teacher: I don't discuss things with ignoramouses.

Mayor: What's going on here?

Teacher: Mr. Mayor, you are on my side.

President: (To the Mayor). Ambrosio began it.

Electrician: I didn't start it.

President: I heard you.

Doctor: (To the President). You didn't hear it.

President: (To the Doctor). So you dare call me a liar?

Doctor: Yes, my esteemed President.

President: My esteemed Doctor, I haven't been able to stand you for a long time.

Doctor: Mr. President, the one I can't stand is you.

Everyone glares at one another with irate glances. The Funeral Director watches the beginning of the discussion with pleasure and leaves hurriedly. He returns now with a cap with a visor, pushing a portable salesman's cart with

little bells that ring when he walks. He advances shouting very animatedly.

Fun. Dir.: Prejudices, intolerances, despotism. I'm selling prejudices...racial prejudices, religious prejudices. Start getting ready for war: I have all the ingredients, complexes, hostilities, revenges, intransigences.

Everyone hurries to the cart and fights to snatch up the merchandise. Ulysses will go again from one to the other, trying to stop them without anybody paying attention to him. He will eventually withdraw toward his corner, from which he will take the radio out of his knapsack and will begin to look for stations. The voices of several people who want to buy are heard.

Voice: I!
 I!
 For me!

Maids I & II: (In unison). He, he, he. For me a dose of resentment.

Blas: For me, a nickel's worth of death.

Several Complexes.
Voices: Resentments.
 Revenge.

The salesman stops passing things out and withdraws, pushing his cart and hawking.

Fun. Dir.: Start getting ready. I have all the ingredients against long noses, against short noses, against tall people, against short people, against whites, against blacks, against yellow skins, against the colorless. (He leaves).

Electrician: Tall people with me!

Teacher: Short people with me!

Electrician: People, your heights don't matter.

Teacher: What is important is knowing to which side you belong. (Pointing to himself)...to the good side (He points at the Electrician)...or to the bad side.

Electrician: (He points to the Teacher)...to the bad (He points to himself)...or to the good side.

Everybody expresses the opinions they have reached. They begin to form two groups again, which each person will go join when he speaks.

Robert: I am with the tall people.

Mayor: I am with the short people.

Richard: Well, I'm with the tall people.

President: I'm with the Mayor. Agatha, you come with me.

Agatha: By no means. I am always with the top group. Gertrude, Gwendolyn, you come with me.

Maids I & II: (In unison). No way, Madame. We are with the underdogs.

First Maid: Look, Madame. Now I'm not walking properly, he, he, he.

The two Maids who had taken off their skates, walk without them, making a lot of noise. The Funeral Director re-enters, this time without the visor or cart, once again

in his funeral role. He joins one side.

Fun. Dir.: I am here.

Blas: (To the Funeral Director). You are wrong.
(He joins the opposite side).

Doctor: (To Blas). You are mistaken.

Priest: I think the tall people are right.

Secretary: The short people are right.

Angela: Yes, the tall people.

Several Sides.
Voices: Parties.
Factions.

Angelina: (To Dorothy). Let me pass.

Dorothy: (To Angelina). How dare you?

Electrician: (To the Shoemaker). You insulted me.

Shoemaker: (To the Electrician). You pushed me.

Priest: (To the Teacher). Athiest.

Teacher: (To the Priest). Buddhist.

On either side of the coffin there are now two new groups of enemies. Ulysses raises the volume of his radio.

Radio: Bulletin, special up-to-date bulletin.
Parrotland declared war on Magpieland.
Attention, flash. It was unexpected and over
a problem of feathers. Magpieland and Parrot-
land...are at war.

Ulysses listens, trembling with fear. He turns off the radio and emits unintelligible sounds, laments like a wounded beast. Several voices are heard.

Voices: It's horrible.
 What barbarity.
 Parrotland at war with Magpieland.

There is a silence. Then everyone says in unison...

Everyone: So what! It isn't our fault.

They freeze, like ridiculous paper dolls, in threatening stances, one side against the other. Cecelia, who only sees the coffin, enters and advances toward it. Ulysses approaches her.

Cecelia: (Speaking quietly, embracing the coffin).
 Leo...dead...

Ulysses tries desperately to talk. There is a great effort reflected on his face which breaks out in beads of perspiration. As always, his lips tremble. Finally, with great difficulty, the mute speaks, pointing to the coffin.

Ulysses: The W....a....r.

Cecelia: Yes, Ulysses, the war.

She sobs and embraces the coffin again. Ulysses can no longer talk, he again emits the pitiful guttural moans. The other characters come to life and from both sides several voices are heard.

Voices: Get them!
 After them!
 Conquer!
 Dominate!

Everyone: (In unison). Kill!

Cecelia: (In a low voice, embracing the coffin). He's
 dead.

The children enter and walk slowly toward Cecelia, looking impressed. There is a short silence, but immediately a voice rises that shouts...

Voice: War!

Cecelia: (Quietly). Dead.

The parents make the children join their groups.

Richard: Angelo, you come with the tall people.

Mayor: You come with the short people, Conrad.

Short People: (In unison). War on the tall people!

Tall People: (In unison). War on the short people!

While Ulysses goes from one group to the other dragging his leg, trying to speak to express his disagreement, everyone repeats with an irrational roar...

Everyone: War, war, war, war, war!

They proceed at the same time to advance, one group

towards the other, the parents keeping the children with them and teaching them to join in the chorus of voices. The characters have formed a circle with aggressive and vicious movements. Ulysses retreats, observing them. His cries grow, they create an anguished counterpoint to the voices calling for war while the curtain closes...

CURTAIN

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APPENDIX

Appendix I

querida lisa routman:

contesto ahora a sus preguntas relacionadas con mi biografía:

Nací en Barcelona, España, de donde salí a la edad de dos años con mis padres. Viví tres años en Bruselas con ellos y a los cinco años llegué a México.

Mi padre, Antonio Vilalta y Vidal, abogado, fue primer teniente de alcalde en Barcelona cuando la República. Un cargo muy importante. Marchó a Bruselas y después a México como exilado político...Vive en México donde ejerce su profesión de abogado.

Mi madre, María Soterias Mauri de Vilalta, murió por desgracia en 1976, en México. Era abogada y tenía además el doctorado en leyes. Fue la primera mujer que obtuvo el doctorado en leyes en la universidad de Barcelona...Al llegar a México mis padres fundaron una especie de institución de seguro social, llamada "La Médico Farmacéutica". En realidad, fue un antecedente del Seguro Social en México y mama llevaba la parte administrativa. Después de eso, tanto papa como mama ya pudieron vivir de su carrera de abogados.

Respeto a otra pregunta de usted:
Sí, por supuesto, el ambiente familiar influyó en mi carrera literaria. En casa, todo era "sopa de letras". Crecí rodeada de libros y en un ambiente intelectual. Eso lo considero muy importante para mi vocación como escritora, que se despertó desde muy temprano.

Siendo adolescente, a los 16 años, me casé con un joven de 18, Gonzalo Yáñez del Hoyo,...mi marido, igual que mis padres, siempre me ha apoyado en mi carrera, me ha alentado, estimulado, etc.

Bien, pues cuando termino una obra de teatro, mis padres...y mi esposo son siempre los primeros en leerla y los más terribles jueces...Mi esposo tiene un puesto como coordinador en jefe en eventos culturales y deportivos en una dependencia del gobierno; su trabajo comprende no sólo la capital sino toda la República Mexicana.

Tengo, Lisa, dos hijos: Adriana, de 23 años, que es licenciada y maestra en filosofía y está cursando ahora el doctorado en la universidad de Berlín...Mi otro hijo, Gonzalo, acaba de cumplir 19 años y estudia la carrera de ingeniería industrial: ese no salió a la familia; no es "literato".

Mis estudios los realice en México, en el Liceo Franco Mexicano, donde curse el Bachillerato Francés, 6 años después de la primera enseñanza, y esto es importante porque es el mismo plan de estudios de Francia. Considero el Bachillerato francés, con sus 6 años de latín lo mismo que de álgebra, muy importante para mi formación. Después estudie letras españolas en la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Y sigo "estudiando"; usted sabe que no se acaba de aprender...

Mis obras están marcadas, además, creo, por tendencias muy diversas, y nunca me pongo contapisas ni barreras para hacerlas...Y todavía, para que me conozca mejor, le expreso ideas deshilvanadas que se me ocurren a vuelo de máquina:

Me gusta siempre experimentar cosas nuevas, porque lo ya conocido no implica desafío y porque un camino ya recorrido poco tendría de creador.

El arte es evolución

No trabajo para el público sino CON el público

la libertad está en nuestra propia mente

alguien dijo algo en lo que estoy muy de acuerdo: vivir "haciendo el amor" con la vida misma.